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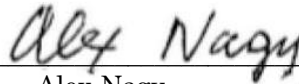
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THE HERO'S JOURNEY AS TRANSFORMATIVE
CHURCH LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The Hero's Journey as Transformative Church Leadership

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This dissertation explored the intersection of leadership of the church as an epic, visionary and transformational journey. Archetypes and mythology have heroes who are often seeking transformation. Using the insights of Joseph Campbell's work on cross-cultural mythology, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, presents what he calls, "The Hero's Journey" or "Mono-myth" is a pattern of narrative that appears in dramas, storytelling, literature, ancient myths, movies, the world's religions and psychological development. It is a map of the journeys taken by humans since the beginning and is found throughout the world as a blueprint of the growth and experience in life. Visionary leadership is about hope. A visionary leader creates a shared vision, purpose and strategy to accomplish the mission of the church. Leadership is an adventure to discover the personal and collective power of a church to navigate conflict, trauma to make heroic and transformative changes.

Part One explored the state of the Church today as paradigm of mission and transformation. Heroes leave the comfort and safety of their world and venture forth to face dragons of conflict, trauma, change and encounter serpents of self-deception, find mentors, allies, experience tests, and suffer trials in a quest for an authentic mission and find the treasure and enlightenment. Part Two will examine the basic stages in the Hero's Journey. Part Three will explore the Hero's Journey as a metaphor of visionary leadership as it seeks so to create shared vision, purpose and strategy to accomplish the mission of the church. The heroic visionary leaders understand they must enter a journey of transformation so that they can return "home" with an enlarged vision and heart to recreate that visionary community elsewhere. But, because church leaders often deal with conflict in churches, we have devoted time to explore conflict transformation and the healing of trauma in making more effective pastors. Finally, we explored the Hero's Journey as a model of Christian spirituality and its implications for church leadership as an adventure to discover the personal and collective power of a church in make heroic and transformative changes. This dissertation is about how church leaders navigate as the journeyer in relation to the congregation as the source of the "call" to adventure and how the leader responds and grows as a leader challenges the organization.

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PART ONE

THE CHURCH ON THE HERO'S JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

Hebrews 11:8¹

The journey towards transformation is a hope-filled mission. Today, the Christian Church, in its local congregational setting and the people who minister within, are in deep need of maps, metaphors and symbolic models to arrive at the transformative purpose for which it was called into existence. This project will be presenting a metaphorical framework that might unlock a pathway for church leaders to travel towards the Church's unique purpose and mission.

The Church finds itself in a chaotic, complacent and cynical place in the US. There is a new future the Church is heading towards; traveling the road to get there is the challenge. This project affirms that there is a power, a vision, a means of arriving at that shared purpose and destiny. This project explores the intersection of leadership of the Church as an epic, visionary and transformational journey.

In this transformative journey for the Church, one must be reminded that God is also a companion on the journey, calling one to see God's hand surprisingly at work even in the darkness towards the promised transformation. What exactly occurs in the darkness and chaos is not always known, but if leaders are willing to continue the journey with faith, something will emerge. John 12:24 says, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears

¹ All Scripture cited from the New Revised Standard version of the Bible.

much fruit.” This metaphor is found throughout the Bible, but is also found in literature and cultures around the world.

The principal guide for the metaphor of transformational change will be through the work of cultural anthropologist and mythologist, Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), who discovered that there is a shared story, a metaphor, for the human journey of transformation. Periodically, the Church finds itself in a state of confusion and darkness; however, it can look to the heroes of the past, who have journeyed and battled through the darkness that has tested their hearts, minds and spirits, and yet have encountered hope and emerged victorious to lead God’s people. A thorough look at the insights of Campbell’s book on cross-cultural mythology, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is essential for this project, as it presents what he calls, “The Hero’s Journey” or “Monomyth.” It is a pattern of narrative that appears in dramas, storytelling, literature, ancient myths, movies, the world’s religions and even psychological development. It is a map of the journeys taken by humans since the beginning and is found throughout the world as a blueprint of growth and the experience of life.

Campbell writes that there is a collective wisdom found in myth, and it is this project’s premise that this wisdom can be a source of inspiration for the heroic journey of the Church and its leaders who are working to transform churches to arrive at their unique God given mission. Through the Hero’s Journey, one can find answers to the complex challenges troubling churches and leaders today. The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a guide for church leaders through the change journeys that inevitably are part of their mission. Facilitating change in the Church is hard work. The roads ahead are

unclear. For many leaders, there is much uncharted frontier territory, but the hero's journey can serve as a roadmap for guidance.

Interest in the subject of the Hero's Journey began in 2012 while completing a year of Pastoral Care Residency or Clinical Pastoral Education at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. At the end of the year it was required that a written project be submitted on a topic of interest. Throughout the year, the topic of the transformation of trauma was discussed. Through academic and pastoral experiences, that year we learned that traumatic experiences could be a journey to a deeper spiritual awakening in the same way that sin and moral failure can be a catalyst to lead one to repentance and return to God. Trauma has the potential to challenge people at their core selves and opens them up to change and growth. As Navy chaplains working in a pluralistic environment, it was clear that we needed to find an inclusive spiritual model that could transcend religious denominations for chaplains working in institutional settings like hospitals.

Research for this project comes from a variety of places, but ultimately focuses on the work of Robert Grant who provides deeper understanding of the phenomenon of trauma from clinical and theoretical perspectives.² Grant uses the insights of Campbell and the Hero's Journey to understand the journey a survivor of trauma must go on to arrive at a new place of healing and wholeness. I integrated Grant's insights and applications into my approach to pastoral care in my next assignment as a hospital chaplain and in my work with military members dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Service members found it a helpful model to assist people through struggles.

² Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (Oakland, CA: Self published, 1999).

The research and insights about the Hero's Journey led to questions about its applications in a larger setting than the individual person and one's battles with trauma: specifically, a descriptive and constructive map for a church going through conflict or change. When a church enters into conflict, it is "cracked open" and its members and clergy often feel trauma and pain because of the turmoil. Leading a church through change is also often a traumatic experience as well. However, if a church can go on this journey of change and transform conflict, it can emerge to a better and deeper spiritual place than where it was before. Trauma, despite its pain, has the power to open a person to profound spiritual growth. Writing on the Hero's Journey and transformational change throughout Doctor of Ministry courses at Fuller led to a deeper understanding that transformational change is something that both church leaders and churches must go through as well.

If an individual who experiences trauma does not go on the journey, the trauma will take them on a journey they may not want to go on - towards a death spiral. In the same way, if a church is experiencing conflict or change, it can also take them on a journey or road the church may not want to go on. For people and churches, it is a life or death choice. It is a choice like that of Jesus Christ's journey and that of countless other mythic heroes of the past in classic literature and cinema.

At the outset of this dissertation, I will look at the state of the Church in the US to understand the setting or context from which the Church begins its journey of transformation. The Church is in a spiritual malaise, some would say that the US is a post-Christian nation. If it is in a place of missional transition, then it is being called to live out its unique calling towards a vision that God has given.

The project will look briefly at some key ideas of psychiatrist Carl Jung, whose concepts Campbell integrated into his work on archetypes and the Hero's Journey, that will serve as the metaphorical and navigational map for visionary leadership, conflict transformation and the healing of traumatic injury. It looks at each stage of the Hero's Journey to understand deeply the steps a potential leader and church must enter into to arrive at a place growth and transformation. The ultimate purpose of the Hero's Journey for the Church and its leaders is not to return to their original point of origin, "the way we used to have church," but to be a transformed church, contributing in a new way to being the Church God calls it to be.

This project also looks at the biblical, theological and spiritual insights of the Christian tradition that support the premise that going on a heroic journey of transformation is life affirming and leads to deeper spiritual growth for a church and its leaders. Looking at biblical heroes and spiritual saints throughout history, will show the similarities of the Hero's Journey to the Christian Life and where there is divergence.

Understanding the Hero's Journey sets the stage for the application of its mythic insights to the work of visionary church leadership, conflict transformation and the healing of trauma. The Hero's Journey is also a metaphor for spirituality and has implications for leading a church through the transformative journey of change. The goal is to provide a theoretical and practical guide for church leaders to facilitate "heroic" organizational transformation so that the Church lives into its mission.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHURCH ON A JOURNEY

There are many ways to think and write about the Church. The Church can be discussed from a variety of perspectives, from theological to institutional, from prophetic herald to mystical communion. Avery Dulles wrote *Models of the Church* where he examined the strengths and weakness of the Church as seen through five models: Institution, Mystical Communion, Sacrament, Herald and Servant.¹ Craig Van Gelder asks readers to see the true essence of the Church as being missional in nature.² Indeed the Church has a calling; God has called the Church into existence for a unique mission in the same way God calls each person to a unique mission.

Will Mancini says, the “Church doesn’t have a mission; the mission of God has a Church.”³ This idea of God having a mission and using the Church to fulfill it means that it is a living organic moving entity. God is continuously calling the Church to a mission. The imagery of pilgrimage has been used to talk about the Church as an embodiment of

¹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1987), 1.

² Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 1.

³ Will Mancini and Warren Bird, *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church’s Future* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2016), 10.

that divinity that brought life to this world. The Church is on a journey of growth towards the fulfillment of its calling. It began at a certain point in time and has moved throughout the world carrying God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ and has evolved on its journey in many forms and denominations - Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant. Today, there are 2.4-billion Christians and over 34,000 denominations in 37-million churches worldwide. For many Christians, the Church is the place where the story of their spiritual journey begins and evolves.

The church is a living organization, not just a denominational, historical, theological question to study. The focus here will be from an organizational and diagnostic approach of where the Church is, its call to the journey of change, the challenges it faces as it seeks transformation, and what it might look like when it returns to its unique God-given mission. There are many practical insights to be gained from the Hero's Journey and from organizational and managerial sciences that can be integrated to reinvigorate leadership in the life of the Church. This work will also reveal something of both the nature of leadership and the Church's mission.

Therefore, this endeavor will see the Church through the eyes of a sojourner, as an organization moving towards the fulfillment of its life-giving, grace-filled, transformative destination. Church leadership is an epic, visionary and transformational journey. Visionary leadership is about hope in action that creates a shared vision, purpose and strategy to accomplish the mission of the Church. This type of farsighted leadership is an adventure to discover the personal and collective power of a church to navigate conflict, trauma and to make heroic transformative changes.

The State of the Church: The Call to Adventure

A long time ago, the Christian Church was the cornerstone of society. Since the fourth century and for well over 1000 years, Christianity and the Western Empire were merged in power and wealth. This was the age of what was called Christendom that began with the conversion of Constantine to Christianity (313 AD) and its eventual establishment as the official religion of the State. The Church and the State became one. Christianity was no longer about its original commission of making disciples but about maintaining the Christian community and status quo. Some argue that the age of Christendom is over and that a new society, a post-Christian age is where the Church finds itself today.

The Barna Group, in its 2016 study of the state of the Church, looked at denominational affiliation, church attendance and faith practices to gauge the overall health of Christianity in the US.⁴ The Barna study addressed the debate about whether the US is a “Christian” nation. Although 73 percent of Americans claim Christianity as their religion, they have proposed another metric, called the “post-Christian metric.”⁵ Of it, the report states: “If an individual meets sixty percent or more of a set of factors, which includes things like disbelief in God or identifying as atheist or agnostic, and they do not participate in practices such as Bible reading, prayer and church attendance . . . they are

⁴ Barna Group, “The State of the Church 2016 Research Releases in Faith,” Barna: Update, September 15, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/>.

⁵ Ibid.

considered post-Christian. Based on this metric, almost half of all American adults (48%) are post-Christian.”⁶

The evidence is mounting that the new US context is post-Christian. In 2015, Sarah Pulliam Bailey reported a Pew Research Study in *The Washington Post* that “Christianity is on the decline in America, not just among younger generations or in certain regions of the country but across race, gender, education and geographic barriers. The percentage of adults who describe themselves as Christians dropped . . . to about 71 percent.”⁷ There is decline in church attendance and aging congregations. Many people do not believe that any one religion has all of the answers or have an exclusive path to God. “It’s remarkably widespread,” said Alan Cooperman, from the Pew Research Center. “The country is becoming less religious as a whole, and it’s happening across the board.”⁸

Scott Cormode says the Christian Church of today is “calibrated for a world that no longer exists. The questions they have are not the questions that we answer.”⁹ Churches are in trouble and face an ambiguous outlook. The world, in which the Church is operating today, has changed rapidly and yet it continues to operate in much the same way it has for centuries. Generational diversity is potentially one of the greatest influencers that calls the Church to know how to weather the storms ahead. Leonard

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Christianity Faces Sharp Decline as Americans are Becoming Even Less Affiliated with Religion,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/12/christianity-faces-sharp-decline-as-americans-are-becoming-even-less-affiliated-with-religion/?utm_term=.7eca8e64cc07.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Scott Cormode, “Advanced Leadership - The World of Leadership,” (Lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, July 25, 2017).

Sweet says, “We have a lot of drowning churches out there, churches are a couple of funerals away from closing because the denial response has taken them almost to the point of no return.”¹⁰ In the footnote, he cites that half of all US Protestant churches have fewer than seventy-five congregants. Clearly, the US is no longer calibrated for Christendom, which supported the status quo and resisted change. The Church in the US is a church headed for extinction.

God is calling the Church to a heroic journey of embracing its mission in a new environment. The Church is being called to go on a journey to its original mission in light of the new world Christians find themselves. It is being called to an adventure of reimagining church towards a new and unique calling. What Jesus Christ said in the Great Commission, is, and should always be at the core of the Church’s mission: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Mt 28:18-20).

No other leader in the Church has influenced me more than Episcopal Bishop Claude Payne. In several days of training in the Diocese of Texas, he presented a model of leadership that challenged priests to be “missionary priests.” His book and his leadership have shaped my thinking on the nature and mission of the Church. Payne says this is a New Apostolic Age: “The great opportunity (for the Church in this New

¹⁰ Leonard I. Sweet, *Soulsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 19.

Apostolic Age) is for the Church to recapture the transformational power of first-century Christianity through adoption of a missionary model.”¹¹ Payne believes that there is a deep spiritual awakening and spiritual hunger in America and that we, as a Christian Church have failed to meet. An example of this failure is evident in the drastic decline in membership among Protestant denominations.¹² Our role as church leaders is to satisfy the demand for that hunger.

Payne points out that each Gospel evangelist had a distinctive way of addressing evangelism: “Matthew understands evangelism as making disciples through baptism and teaching. Discipleship is word and deed combined with instruction and service. Mark’s emphasis on evangelism is proclamation; likewise, is Luke’s in addition to witness.”¹³ For Payne, the message of evangelism is simply the Good News of Jesus Christ, what Jesus taught and did.¹⁴ The reason for evangelism is so that others experience the Risen Christ and the power to transform the lives of those who believe.¹⁵ The Gospels are clear, Christians are to “Go forth and make disciples of all nations.”¹⁶ The call to evangelism is extended to all believers, and it is the Church’s job to equip believers for this mission. The Great Commission and the Great Commandment (love of God and neighbor) are

¹¹ Claude E. Payne and Hamilton Beazley, *Reclaiming the Great Commission: A Practical Model for Transforming Denominations and Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 25.

¹² Ibid., ix.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

closely interrelated.¹⁷ Payne says, “Evangelism is not a new program of the Church; rather, it is the essential work of the Church.”¹⁸

Darrell Guder’s opinions about the role of the Church’s mission resonate with Payne and are sound and convincing. Guder contends that the Jesus movement¹⁹ became an institution largely concerned with taking care of its members. Guder says that this is the “fundamental purpose of the Christian church. Rather than seeing mission as, at best, one of the necessary prongs of the church’s calling, and at worst as a misguided adventure, it must be seen as the fundamental, the essential, the central understanding of the church’s purpose and action.”²⁰ Guder counsels that everything done as a church, structures, theology, service, preaching, buildings, scriptural interpretation, should be missional in nature. Again, mission work is not another “program” people should be doing; rather, it is “the essential, the centering understanding of the church’s purpose and action.”²¹

The era of Christendom represented an age of innocence; it was a time when the pews were full of members and tradition reigned supreme. Ross Douthat claims, “America’s problem isn’t too much religion, or too little of it, it’s bad religion: the slow motion collapse of traditional Christianity and the rise of a variety of destructive pseudo-

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ This refers to the Church after Jesus, and not specifically to the movement of the 1970s.

²⁰ Darrell Guder, ed., “The Church as Missional Community,” in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, eds. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2005), 116.

²¹ Ibid.

Christianities is in its place.”²² Much of his book, *Bad Religion*, is an examination of those false imitators of orthodox Christianity, but before that, he looks at post-World War II American Christianity. He goes on to say that the Church has entered a “near terminal decline . . . churches with the strongest connection to the past have lost members, money and authority: the elite that was once at least sympathetic to Christian ideas has become hostile or indifferent: and the culture as a whole has turned its back on many of the faiths precepts and demands.”²³

This gap between the apparent innocent Christendom of the old world experienced in America in the post-World War II 1950s and the chaotic reality of the current pluralistic world that surfaces, points to an innocence that is “lost.” This “lost innocence” often challenges the mythic heroes in the world’s literature and religions that Campbell points to as the starting place for the Hero’s Journey. This same “lost innocence” challenges the Church today. Church leaders should be asking these urgent and critical questions: Why are we doing what we are doing? Whom are we seeking to serve? What exactly are we searching for? What will our destination look like when we arrive? How can we bring stability to the confusion around us? These questions are just the beginning of an awakening to an adventure that call for clarity about the nature of the Church. There is a growing awareness that the status quo is not where the Church is called to be; courage and the call to a new adventure is needed. The Church is being

²² Ross Gregory Douhat, *Bad Religion: How we Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 3.

²³ Ibid.

called to a journey of change and new strategies for the transformation always starts with a need and a vision to motivate that change.²⁴

The Church in Transition: Spiritual Strategic Journey of Initiation

Time and culture are changing tremendously. The Church finds itself in a post-modern, post-Christian world. Yet the Church, in general, is among the institutions that resists change the most. Innocence is the condition many churches and leaders find themselves in and it is most noticeable when they long for the past as discussed above. This longing is an inward-looking comfort zone. When a church lives here, unfortunately, it is consistent with a church that is dying.

This is most often seen when churches are focused on keeping old members instead of growing with new people outside the faith. This is seen in churches where there is no sense of urgency for growth; parishioners want their pastor to be only their chaplain. If there is a sense of urgency, it is about survival, recruiting “new blood” and concern about “keeping the lights on.” Congregations in this stage say they want to grow but have more affection for the past than the potential growth of the future. A sign of this type of stagnation is evident in the lack of “new” leadership; the same people seem always to be in charge. Another sound that is heard is the mantra of “we have always done it this way” just at the moment when a new proposal is mentioned.

Yet, there is this unease and a sense by parishioners that the all too familiar means there are ominous signs of trouble ahead. In congregational life, it may be declining attendance or income and conflict among members, or it may be the departure of a pastor

²⁴ Payne, *Reclaiming the Great Commission*, 32.

and the need for the organization to call a new pastor that begins the adventure as a process. The old pastor is gone, fired, retired or dead. It is time to call a new person to the pulpit. Something has happened that has created a need for the congregation to embark on the adventure of calling a new faith leader. This is also a stage where conflict may be absent. The opportunity for transformation has arrived but along with it, the opportunity for conflict. For a church leader, this may sound like a crisis, or wake-up call that something in an organization needs attention because of dissatisfaction expressed by key stakeholders. This wake-up call may also manifest itself with congregational leaders experiencing emotional events, personal troubles or health issues.

For any organization to change or grow, it must become uncomfortable with the status quo. For example, I led the development of a parish day school from pre-school to the eighth grade in Miami in the face of deep hidden resistance, conflict and even sabotage. The resistance was brought out of fear that successful growth would also mean a change from the inevitable need to focus on all of the new families and children the school would bring.

In either case, once the call is heard within a church and its leadership, that the traditional ways of being a church seem not to be working, that is when the journey begins; that is when the plot thickens. The journey for a church and its leaders is one of an initiation into trials and transitions towards transformation. It is a calling to an unknown territory that can create apprehension and fear. It is a time to prepare for the change journey. John Kotter, in his watershed article, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” spells out with great clarity why transformation efforts

fail.²⁵ Among the eight steps needed for transformational change to happen and the lessening of conflict, a leader must build a sense of urgency, enlist coalitions, create and communicate a vision. A more detailed discussion of the eight steps will follow.

Change is about creating a new organizational culture toward a new-shared mission. Heroic church leaders set out on a change journey despite fears and uncertainties. They can, however, choose to ignore this calling. They are called to leave their norm and set forth into new adventures. The Church is called to go on a journey of discovery in fulfilling its mission. To go on this type of journey invites occasional conflict and chaos. Conflict occurs when opposing ideas are present, whether they be over liturgy, theology, morality or budgets. The Church is called to persevere through these painful experiences toward new understanding and enlightenment of her mission. Kotter speaks poignantly on this: “There are still more mistakes that people make . . . in reality, even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises.”²⁶

Leading through Adaptive Change

Leadership is about being on a heroic journey. Heroes and leaders have much in common. Courage and hope are virtues both leaders and heroes have possessed throughout the ages. Heroic leaders have been the agents of transformation at key moments and crossroads in the military, business, political and ecclesiastical worlds. But heroic leaders are not born; they all must journey to that destination. They inspire others to make that journey during times of darkness and confusion to give light and clarity.

²⁵ John Kotter, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail,” *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1995): 56-67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

This is such a time in the life of the Christian Church as well. Church leadership has never been more subtle and complex as it is today. Finding a roadmap to that heroic leadership requires many skills and insights. As stated in the Introduction, the main premise is to explore the mythological insights of the Hero's Journey as presented by Campbell and see the lessons and parallels that might exist for church leadership both individually and collectively.

The *Arcade Dictionary of Word Origins* has two definitions for the word "lead." One is for the metal that "may have come ultimately from an Indo-European source meaning 'flow' (a reference to the metal's low melting point)." The other traces lead to "a prehistoric West and North Germanic *laithjan*," which derived from *laitho*, meaning way or journey, from which derives from the English word load. Etymologically then, "lead means cause to go along one's way."²⁷

Therefore, the relationship of leading to journeying is quite a fascinating metaphor that merits exploration. Comparison of heroes and leaders also share the distinction that they aim high, make sacrifices and return for the sake of others in the community. Heroic leadership is one of self-mastery in the context of change and chaos.

However, a crucial difference between management and leadership is that in management, one handles existing resources to achieve known objectives and in leadership, one tries to achieve results with uncertainty. The point of leadership is to go on a journey; the point of management is to handle resources. It is not an either/or competition, just a distinction.

²⁷ John Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (New York: Arcade, 1993), 251. As found in "Etymology of Leadership," Holistic Toolkit.Com, February 21, 2014, <https://shoshannanicole.wordpress.com/2014/02/21/leadership/>.

A common understanding about leadership is that it is about organizing, motivating and influencing the actions of others to help them achieve meaningful goals and results. Leadership is an interaction of the leader, the follower and a situation. It is a journey with others to a new place. Leadership is a movement of people and resources to a yet never-traveled-to location. That being said, leadership is a complex and multidisciplinary praxis. Central to what this dissertation will be about is exploring leadership and its functions in symbolic organizations, such as churches, temples or other meaning-making theological settings.

Exploring leadership in these types of settings is particularly a more visionary model and thus, the journey metaphor is relevant. A leader does not go on an uncertain journey, marshaling people, resources with plans to fail; no, the leader goes forth into that unknown with hope of successful results. Heroic visionary leadership is therefore, about hope. A heroic leader helps discover shared values, passions, interests and burdens. A visionary leader in a church setting creates a shared vision, purpose and strategy to accomplish the mission of the church. It is about affirming the personal and collective power and responsibility of a church to make heroic and transformative changes.

There are many definitions and models of leadership in the field of organizational management and behavior. There are models that focus on group processes, matters of personality, inducing compliance, the exercise of influence and persuasion; there are also models that focus on power relations as instruments to achieve goals, and, of course, the self-differentiated role, structure or any combination of these and other elements.²⁸

²⁸ Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 11-18.

Joseph Rost has written a milestone book on the subject of leadership and says there are some essential elements in defining leadership.²⁹ Of critical importance is the emphasis in the role of influence, leaders, followers, change and mutuality. Leadership then is an influence activity among people, not just something, that one person does in isolation. Rost defines leadership as “an influential relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect mutual purposes.”³⁰

In *Leadership without Easy Answers*, Ronald Heifetz sees “leadership as an activity, insisting on the notion that leaders are made and not born.”³¹ Leaders usually deal with two types of problems: technical and adaptive. He writes, “The technical problems can be solved through previous knowledge, expertise, and good management while keeping the system as is. Whereas, adaptive problems require learning and change of mind and heart that lead to change in the system.”³² Adaptive changes are more challenging and much harder than technical ones, “because they deal with the reality of having to change and challenge the status quo, and people are generally resistant to change, especially when it comes to change in values, beliefs, or behaviors.”³³ He continues, “In situations that call for adaptive work, however, social systems must learn their way forward...authority must look beyond authoritative solutions.”³⁴

²⁹ Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Prager, 1991), 104.

³⁰ Ibid., 102.

³¹ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers, Professional Development Collection* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 20.

³² Ibid., 85.

³³ Ibid., 17-18.

³⁴ Ibid., 85.

The Church Living out its Unique Vision

If a church were to go on the Hero's Journey, it would look different upon its return from its journey. It would have had to let go of being the church it used to be, (adaptive change) and it would have to enter into a labyrinth of chaos and conflict in order for it to be initiated into the transformative challenges it must face. Lastly, it would emerge with a unique vision for a mission, of what it is calling is to be in this post-modern, post-Christian world. The effect of a church going on the Hero's Journey is to bring new life to its mission. The purpose of a church going on this journey is to return it to its original mission and reason for existence.

Jesus Christ called disciples to separate from the world they knew and enter into a journey that would challenge them and ultimately transform them into the saints that would inspire followers to do the same. But Jesus also told his followers that following him would be costly: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:24–25; Mk 8:34–35; Lk 9:23–24).

If a church and its leaders were then to go on this Hero's Journey, what would emerge is a missional church ready to meet the adapted needs of the current generation. It is not a church of the Christendom era; it is a transformed church for today. It is not a one-time event but a journey of growth that is continuous. Based on what a church and its leaders learn on the journey, others may embark guided by the legacy of what is learned.

Timothy Keller delivers a compelling vision of what a Missional Church looks like in his 2001 essay called “The Missional Church.”³⁵ Keller says that there are five elements or signs of a “missional” church: discourse in the vernacular, entering and re-telling the culture’s stories with the Gospel, theologically training lay people for public life and vocation, creating Christian community, which is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive and practicing Christian unity as much as possible on the local level.³⁶ Keller compares the Christendom of yesterday to the calling of the Church to live out its mission as British missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, observed when he went to India and saw Christianity in a non-Christian culture. When he returned some thirty years later, he found the West was no longer a Christian society and the Church had not adapted to the post-Christian world. He writes,

The church still ran its ministries assuming that a stream of Christianized, traditional/moral people would simply show up in services. Some churches certainly did “evangelism” as one ministry among many. But the church in the West had not become completely “missional”---adapting and reformulating absolutely everything it did in worship, discipleship, community, and service-so as to be engaged with the non-Christian society around it.³⁷

Mancini says, “Vision transfers through people not paper,” so the visioning process is a people-to-people collaborative process. A choice to respond to the call begins the movement out of chaos into the adventure of the vision quest, the third phase of the Hero’s Journey.

³⁵ Timothy Keller, “The Missional Church,” RedeemerCitytoCity.com, accessed August 2, 2018, download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Missional_Church-Keller.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Loren Mead of the Alban Institute in his book, *The Once and Future Church*, captures the metaphors of the Hero's Journey for the Church when he talks about "transformational" change versus "transitional change."³⁸ He writes, "Organizational specialists distinguish between "transitional and transformational change. By transitional change they mean the adaptations and shifts brought by temporary dislocations and discomforts, moving to a new stability. By transformational change they mean the shattering of the foundations and the reconstitution of a new reality."³⁹

The Hero's Journey is the metaphor for the transformation of the Church. Mead goes on to talk about "learning points" which can be similar to what Campbell will say is hearing the call to the adventure a church and its leaders must respond to, "those moments special to a single congregation when those particular people feel a challenge to change and are ready to act."⁴⁰ These "learning points" are not natural marks of the Church; they must be achieved only through a process or journey towards them in a post-Christendom world. Of course, an organization and its leaders can refuse the opportunity to accept the call, because they are unwilling or there are no outside resources available to assist with the challenge to change. In the Christendom model, churches were structured for "uniformity and permanence" but in times of change, there is need of heroic leadership: "We badly need innovators, people and groups who will take a stab at

³⁸ Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1991), 70.

³⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

a new way with freedom to fail.”⁴¹ A church and its leaders that accept the call to change and go on the journey enter into a heroic quest towards fulfillment of its God-given mission. The Church’s companion on this journey is the Holy Spirit.

Mead goes on to write about the “boundaries” that must be crossed that are the “important definers of change.”⁴² When the hero leaves his known ordinary world of comfort, the hero enters into an unknown world. This is one of the stages that will be examining in the Hero’s Journey - the initiation into the learning opportunities and challenges that will result in transformation.

If a church goes on a transformational journey, it may arrive at a place it never imagined before, that may be outside the Christendom paradigm that manifests itself in a new vision of its mission. This does not mean only honoring the successful heroes of a transformational journey. Mead says, “Faithfulness in the church has always been faithfulness in following the call. It has rarely meant winning.”⁴³

One may ask, what are the signs of a church that is faithful to its mission? Mancini says that people fall into “the common habit of neglecting what makes a congregation unique and gravitating toward adopting programs and mind-sets that works elsewhere. Leaders today have not clearly discerned the uniqueness of their church.”⁴⁴ This loss of a church’s unique DNA is a failure of vision. It is a failure to see that God created each person, leader and church in a unique fashion. Faithful churches must go on

⁴¹ Ibid., 73.

⁴² Ibid., 75.

⁴³ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁴ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 9.

a journey of discovering their unique calling and mission. Becoming a missional church begins with a journey towards discovering a church's unique vision. A discussion of Mancini's "Vision Framing" process will show its similarity to the Hero's Journey.

To be a heroic visionary leader in the church is to accept the call and the responsibility to a sustained commitment of a healing vision for the complex problems facing society and church today. To create a healing vision, leaders must allow a process to happen that brings coalitions of people together in open spaces of conversation and not through legislative votes or hierarchal models of organizational judicatory leadership.

Payne, the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Texas, envisioned just such a missionary model of church, instead of a maintenance or Christendom model of church. This missionary model, had as its core attributes, the making of disciples and the transformation of lives. The core value was to "love," with a focus on the lost, the needy, and the suffering, using the means of discipleship and the baptismal covenant, so that the core result was joy.⁴⁵ Both the Hero's Journey and a mission model of the Church are about the transformation and healing of lives.

The hope is that leaders will see how the Hero's Journey can be a metaphor for the Church to discover again its original apostolic mission to transform lives so that people may live out their unique God-given mission. For church leaders to go on the Hero's Journey, also, means personal transformation. Before a church can change, leaders must change. It is a sacred responsibility for a leader to take a church on a journey of change.

⁴⁵ Payne, *Reclaiming the Great Commission*, 46-47.

Reggie McNeal says, “God shapes our lives; He does not script them . . . spiritual leaders are coconspirators with God in how their lives turn out.”⁴⁶ This conviction was further strengthened by my study of the Kabbalah under Steve Robbins at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles over twenty-two years ago. I learned that all have, what Kabbalists call, a “*tikkun*” - a unique mission to repair the world. It may not make one happy; it may not make one famous or rich or anything nearing the fulfillment of one’s personal desires or will, but the accomplishment of it, one’s unique *tikkun*, one’s mission, is necessary and needed by the Universe, and accomplishment of it may even go unnoticed , but when she does it and fulfills her *tikkun*, she brings healing.

Similarly, the Church, also living as it is in a time of significant stress and change, must reflect with its leaders on what is its *tikkun* and remain open to the Spirit. Having a map to guide through this journey and a vision pathway process is a Divine gift. When a church accepts the call to go on the Hero’s Journey, using the Vision Pathway process in Mancini’s *Church Unique*, will help it discover and live into its unique *tikkun* – its God-given vision and mission. Thus, the journey to discover a church’s unique vision and mission is both an inward and outward journey towards the God of hope.

⁴⁶ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders*, updated ed., Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 15.

CHAPTER 2

THE HERO'S JOURNEY ORIGINS AND APPLICATIONS

Mythology is an interesting and diverse field. The origins of the word “myth” comes from the Greek word, *mythos*. Harry Slochower, in his book *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in Literary Classics* believes newly found interest in myth began in the nineteenth century as a response to the perils of Modernity and its ability to demystify “ancient folkways.” He says, “The revival of myth in our time is an attempt to satisfy the human need for relatedness to fellow-travelers on our common journey.”¹ Slochower says that myth deals with creation, destiny and the human desire to deal with the fundamental questions like, “Who am I, where do I come from, where am I going and how do I get there?”² Myths help people find and explain their ways in the world. Myths can be maps to one's inner landscape.

Myths are about the stories told to make meaning of the world. Karen Armstrong says, “Myth looks back to the origins of life, to the foundations of culture, and to the deepest levels of the human mind. Myth was not concerned with practical matters, but

¹ Harry Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973, 1970), 15.

² Ibid.

with meaning.”³ Myths are paradigms created to communicate about change and transformation. It is human nature, always to be trying to find meaning; people are meaning-making machines.

Elizabeth Vandiver’s definition of myths is, “traditional stories a society tells itself that encode or represent the worldview, beliefs, principles and often fears of the society.”⁴ Some scholars believe myths explain the how’s and why’s of the world. Some believe myths explain the “existence and behavior of gods and mystical powers beyond the normal day-to-day world of ordinary experience.”⁵ Mircea Eliade’s classic definition is:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the “beginnings” . . . how through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality--an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something was produced, began to be. . . . In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really establishes the World and makes it what it is today.⁶

Sigmund Freud thought of myth as, “distorted vestiges of the wish-phantasies of whole nations—the age-long dreams of young humanity.”⁷ Carl Jung, the twentieth-

³ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), xv.

⁴ Bernie Clark, *From the Gita to the Grail: Exploring Yoga Stories and Western Myths* (Indianapolis: Blue River Press, 2014), ix. Here he cites the work of Elizabeth Vandiver from her Classical Mythology Lecture 03 –Why is Myth? Found on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxqMzBSEMNI>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality: Religious Tradition of the World* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998), 5.

⁷ G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1973), 273.

century psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology said, “The conclusion that the myth-makers thought in much the same ways as we still think in dreams is almost self-evident. . . . However, one must certainly put a large question mark after the assertion that myths spring from the ‘infantile’ psychic life of the race. They are on the contrary the most mature product of that young humanity.”⁸ Armstrong points to the same psychic power of myth:

The various mythological stories, which were not intended to be taken literally, were an ancient form of psychology. When people told stories about heroes who descended into the underworld, struggled through labyrinths, or fought with monsters, they were bringing to light the obscure regions of the subconscious realm, which is not accessible to purely rational investigation, but which has a profound effect upon our experience and behavior.⁹

Similarly, Campbell said there are four core functions of myth: metaphysical, cosmological, sociological and psychological. The first was a metaphysical purpose, which was to arouse in humans a sense of the awe and mystery of creation so that one experienced a transcendent mystical source for all things in the Universe. The second was a cosmological dimension, similar to science, but in this case, to awaken an awareness of the cosmos in a mystical awe to the self and one’s place within the cosmos. The third was a sociological function, which answers the questions of morality, ethics and roles within the society. The fourth was the psychological, that had a pedagogical function to deal with rites of passage, from birth to death, through any life crisis, this function,

⁸ C.G. Jung and Robert Alan Segal, *Encountering Jung On Mythology, Encountering Jung* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 31.

⁹ Armstrong, *Battle for God*, xv.

harmonizes one's journey of life.¹⁰ These four functions of myth can inform "our environment, our people, our individual life and finally to the mystery of life."¹¹

Campbell's understanding of the psychological function of myth came out of Jung's work with archetypes and helped him define the hero as an integration of the anima and animus which will be examined more in the next section. The power of myth to understand our world is exhibited by the fact that every culture has created myths. Many of the world's myths have been told as stories of transformation. This project seeks to explore the Hero's Journey as a map for change and the transformation of a leader and a church. It will examine how myths can better help people understand how the church and how leaders can better navigate the mission of the Church.

Metaphors of a hero and journey both have universal power that is being used in the literature of self-discovery, personal inquiry and organizational renewal. At the core of this dissertation is the belief that for a church to navigate change, find its vision and heal from conflict, leaders themselves must also undergo a journey of transformation. To understand properly the power of the Hero's Journey myth and its possible effectiveness as a metaphor for transformational leadership, it will be crucial to begin with its origins.

Archetypes, Origins and Mythology

The concept of the journey is a timeless metaphor found throughout ancient civilizations. James George Frazer's, *The Golden Bough* (1994/1890) was a classic study

¹⁰ Joseph Campbell and Bill D. Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 38, 39.

¹¹ Clark, *From the Gita to the Grail*, xxxvii.

of the archetypal beliefs and mythic patterns of humanity.¹² It had an influence on the literary and psychological traditions of Freud, Jung and the literary concept of the monomyth espoused by mythologist Campbell.

Carl Jung and Archetypes

It was the work of Jung that had the most profound influence on Campbell. However, before going further in this discussion, it must be acknowledged that some mythologists and narrow Christian circles have criticized Jung and Campbell. Ann Bedford Ulanov and Alvin Dueck begin their book, *The Living God and our Living Psyche*, by stating that Jung is rejected by some as, “politically naïve, individualistic, psychologically reductionist, morally ambiguous, elitist, and Gnostic. His view of women has been dismissed as essentialist and stereotyped. In some circles, his psychology is relegated to the occult or disparaged as New Age.”¹³ But, Ulanov and Dueck go on to argue that Jung is actually a friend to Christianity and that he was writing at a time in which Modernity was actually the foe to religion and that Jung, the descendent of several generations of Reformed Christian ministers, was trying to find a vocabulary to keep Christianity relevant for Modern times.¹⁴ However, one sees Jung; the task here is not to establish the truth or relevance of his ideas but simply to present the key ideas that influenced Campbell.

¹² James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (North Charleston, SC: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).

¹³ Ann Belford Ulanov and Alvin C. Dueck, *The Living God and our Living Psyche: What Christians Can Learn from Carl Jung* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

Jung created a vocabulary or metaphor to talk about the human mind or psyche, which he understood as existing in three “psychic levels;” the consciousness, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. These three areas of the mind interact with each other in a compensating manner while jostling for control. The conscious part of the mind is awake and aware of its psychic contents. The unconscious area is represented in two distinct categories, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.¹⁵ Jung believed that it was in the collective unconscious where there is “identical psychic structure common to all.” Jung called them “archetypes.” He believed that the human mind or psyche contains elements, which transcend individuals, and are common to all persons.

Ulanov and Dueck say, “Archetypes are devoid of any specific content, and require some symbol or image through which they can find concrete expression.”¹⁶ Jung expanded on the idea of the archetype as a universal symbolic pattern found in all major world religions, mythological systems and worldviews. For Jung, myths were a manifestation of archetypes. According to Jung:

The concept of the archetype . . . is derived from the repeated observation that . . . the myths and fairy tales of world literature contain definite motifs which crop up everywhere. . . . They have their origin in the archetype, which in itself is an irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche and can therefore manifest itself spontaneously anywhere, at any time.¹⁷

Jung traces the origin of the term back to Plato, Philo, Irenaeus, the *Imago Dei* (God-image) and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which associate archetypes with divinity and

¹⁵ Anthony Storr, *The Essential Jung* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 67.

¹⁶ Ulanov and Dueck, *The Living God and our Living Psyche*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 415.

the creation of the world.¹⁸ He found that in myths and religions of past cultures there appeared similar patterns, themes and symbols.

One symbol relevant to this project and that of Campbell's Hero's Journey is that of the circle, which is an "image of completeness and infinity . . . used as symbol depicting divinity and is reflective of the Self archetype."¹⁹ It is through symbols that archetypes can best be understood. Edward Edinger, Jungian psychoanalyst and a founding member of the C.G. Jung Foundation, contrasts this to a sign: "A sign is a token of meaning that stands for a known entity. By this definition, language is a system of signs, not symbols. A symbol, on the other hand, is an image or representation that points to something essentially unknown, a mystery. A sign communicates abstract, objective meaning whereas a symbol conveys living, subjective meaning."²⁰

Symbols, therefore, point to something outside this world and to psychic patterns of the unconscious realm. He believed understanding these symbols in dreams, for example, were essential for self-understanding.²¹ He writes:

Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. This is one reason why all religions employ symbolic language or images. But this conscious use of symbols is only one aspect of a psychological fact of great importance: Man also produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously, in the form of dreams.²²

¹⁸ C.G. Jung, *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung* (New York: Modern Library, 1959), 287.

¹⁹ Ulanov and Dueck, *The Living God and our Living Psyche*, 16.

²⁰ Edward F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 109.

²¹ C.G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (Bowdon, UK: Stellar Classics, 2013), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

The commonality of dreams and the symbols therein reveals the collective unconscious. Jung writes, “The dream is a fragment of involuntary psychic activity.”²³ Therefore, dreams can reveal primordial archetypes.

A central concept for Jung is a process he called individuation *principium individuationis*. He writes, “Individuation means becoming a single, homogenous being, and, in so far as ‘individuality’ embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness.”²⁴ It is the process of becoming your unique self. For Jung the archetypal hero represents the psyche’s quest for individuation. This, becoming your true self, is a dynamic movement in the unconscious.²⁵ Along these lines:

The archetypal images represent several basic stages of the life drama symbolized by the Hero myth. They lead from an initial stage of unconsciousness before the ego has awakened, through various stages of heroic struggle, to a final state of “wholeness” or integration when life has reached its full potential and a relationship between the human and divine has been reestablished. Jung called this process “individuation,” the process of becoming the true individual that one really is.²⁶

Campbell became friends with Jung and with Heinrich Zimmer, who became a mentor to Campbell. Jung corresponded with Campbell and they spent a notable afternoon at Jung’s castle retreat in Bollingen on Lake Zurich.²⁷ Campbell built on Jung’s work on the psyche and believed the inner mind found expression in these symbols,

²³ Jung, *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung*, 364.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁵ Donald Kalsched and Alan Jones, “Myth and Psyche: the Evolution of Consciousness,” *Quadrant: The Journal of the C.G. Jung Foundation* (November 15, 1986), http://www.cgjungny.org/d/d_mythpsyche.html, 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Johnathan Young, “Joseph Campbell: His Life and Contributions,” *Psychology Online Journal* 2:8 (2006 and 2001), http://www.folkstory.com/campbell/psychology_online_joseph_campbell.html.

dreams and in mythology. He has become by far the most popular mythologist of the past century, but he has been criticized as well. Vandiver is highly critical of Campbell's work. She has accused him of being selective in the stories he analyzes and cherry picking only those elements of a culture's myth that he sees as having common narrative elements. In addition, she argues that he asserts that myth is true metaphysically and spiritually. She goes on to criticize that he believes that myth is true across different cultures and necessary for individual personal growth. Campbell, she says, believes that myth is best understood outside of a culture rather than within the religious domain and that, religion and its doctrines have distorted the original spiritual meaning of myth. Furthermore, Campbell never demonstrates the validity of his position but simply asserts his position.²⁸

Joseph Campbell and Origins of the Hero's Journey

Nonetheless, Campbell's work in cross-cultural mythology, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, first published in 1949, is a prodigious achievement and massively popular.²⁹ In the book, he describes what he called, "The Hero's Journey" or "Monomyth." It is a pattern of narrative identified by Campbell that appears around the world in dramas, storytelling, literature, ancient myths, movies, the world's religions and psychological development. It is a map of the journeys taken by humans since the beginning and found throughout the world as a blueprint of growth and experience of life. Despite Vandiver's criticism that the monomyth was unsupportable, that it was reflective

²⁸ Clark, *From the Gita to the Grail*, x-xi.

²⁹ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 47.

of his personal philosophy and that he was more of a metaphysicist than a mythologist,³⁰ the insights of Campbell and the Hero's Journey can serve as a powerful metaphor and template of transformation for individuals and organizations, like the Church.

Campbell came to understand the Hero's Journey through the writings of James Joyce and through his own studies. The hero archetype is a person who goes out to accomplish great things for a group, people or civilization. Campbell believes that storytelling throughout history has shared a fundamental structure and can be summarized in this way: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces there are encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."³¹ The Hero's Journey is part of the collective unconscious and is seen as a three-part movement: Separation, Initiation and Return.

In its simplest form, it looks like the following pattern. The first stage is separation: the hero feels a need to change which may be coming from within or from outside. A sudden illness, trauma or loss can push or pull the hero across a threshold into the unknown, which begins the second stage - the initiation and journey. The familiar theme is one where heroes face challenges, trials and tests until finally, they enter an abyss and face their darkest foes and fears. If triumphant, the hero gets the treasure, gift or boon and is transformed. The final stage is where the hero returns with the gift to use it to help the community from where he came. The return trip can be very challenging, as well as transformative. The journey continues even after the transformation only to repeat

³⁰ Clark, *Gita to Grail*, xi.

³¹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 47.

again the next time there is a new call. It is a journey of transformation. The Hero's Journey is the journey of visionary leaders. It is a journey of life-long learning and personal transformation. Campbell believed any hero's journey is also a story of death and resurrection. One must die to self so that a new self may be born, bigger and better.

The Hero's Journey has also been adapted to map the journey of educational leadership, organizational change, as a developmental metaphor in counseling, storytelling in mediation and the role of change agents. The Hero's Journey has the potential to serve as a metaphorical and navigational map for visionary leadership, conflict transformation and heal trauma. The chart shows the Hero's Journey (graphic in public domain):³²

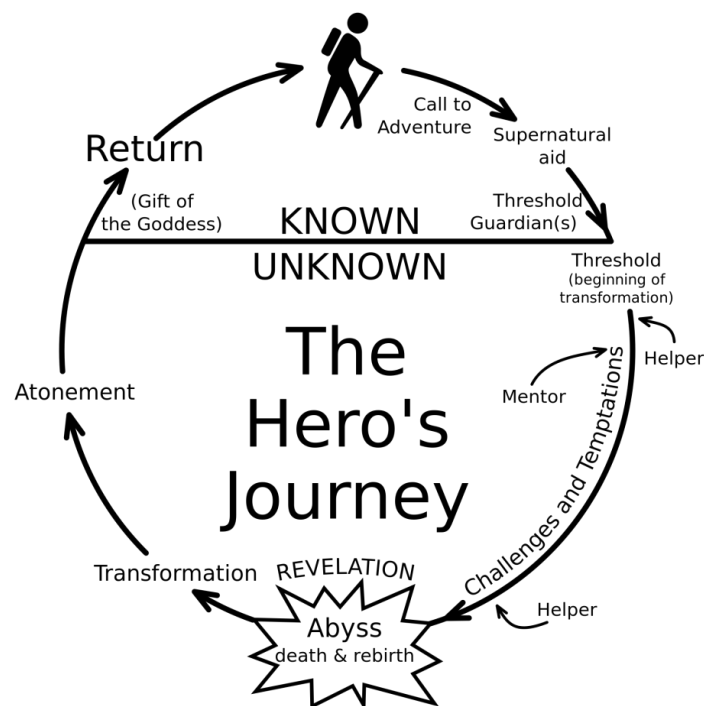


Illustration 1. The Hero's Journey

³² Wikipedia contributors, "Monomyth," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Monomyth&oldid=724073722> (accessed June 21, 2016).

Campbell divided the Hero's Journey into as many as seventeen stages, but at its core are the three major steps - Separation, Initiation and Return. Part Two of this dissertation will examine the basic stages in the Hero's Journey.

The Hero's Journey as applied in Film and Literature

The mythic structure of the Hero's Journey has found its way into the world of filmmaking and is hugely popular. One might say that Hollywood has canonized the Hero's Journey as the movie studios' business plan. It has become the template for a successful blockbuster film. Hollywood is possessed by the concept of a hero battling forces, being transformed and returning home with the gift to benefit their world. Audiences in movies always root and cheer for the good guy. Good always wins over evil. Superhero movies from the Marvel and DC comic franchises have made billions of dollars. From Superman to Spiderman and from Ironman to Batman, these movies have one structure in common, the Hero's Journey. Harry Potter, The Matrix, Lion King, Wizard of Oz, Star Wars and the Lord of the Rings series of movies all highlight in detail the Hero's Journey. A visit to the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDb) will show at least sixty-six movies that best show the Hero's Journey structure in Hollywood films, but there are now, literally, hundreds of movies that follow the pattern of the Hero's Journey.

Comic-Con International draws millions of visitors from around the world to conventions, whose characters are mostly heroes. Christopher Vogler, a screenwriter and story consultant in 1992, popularized the stages into twelve from seventeen in his book,

The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers.³³ The book evolved from a seven-page memo he wrote, while working as a story consultant at Disney. Vogler called it, *A Practical Guide to the Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He discovered Campbell's work while studying film at the University of Southern California. His memo was circulated throughout all of the movie studios. He worked on *The Lion King* and many other projects using the Hero's Journey as a storyboard. He started teaching at UCLA's Writer's Program and eventually wrote *The Writer's Journey*, which is now mandatory reading for any novelist or screenwriter. In his book, he says that the success of filmmakers, like John Boorman, George Miller, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and Francis Coppola, is due in part to the mythic structure found in the Hero's Journey.³⁴ Vogler's more approachable twelve stage Hero's Journey looks like this:

There are stages that are fundamental and critical on the journey and there are personal states of being for the character or psychological steps in the transformation process. Vogler says that writers should retell the hero story in their own way: "Every storyteller bends the mythic pattern to his or her own purpose or the needs of a particular culture. That's why the hero has a thousand faces."³⁵ Vogler warned that the Hero's Journey is a guideline and not a mathematical formula. The ultimate test of the success of a story is its "lasting popularity and effect on the audience."³⁶

³³ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007).

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Ibid., 7.

³⁶ Ibid., 232.

Christopher Vogler “The Hero’s Journey”

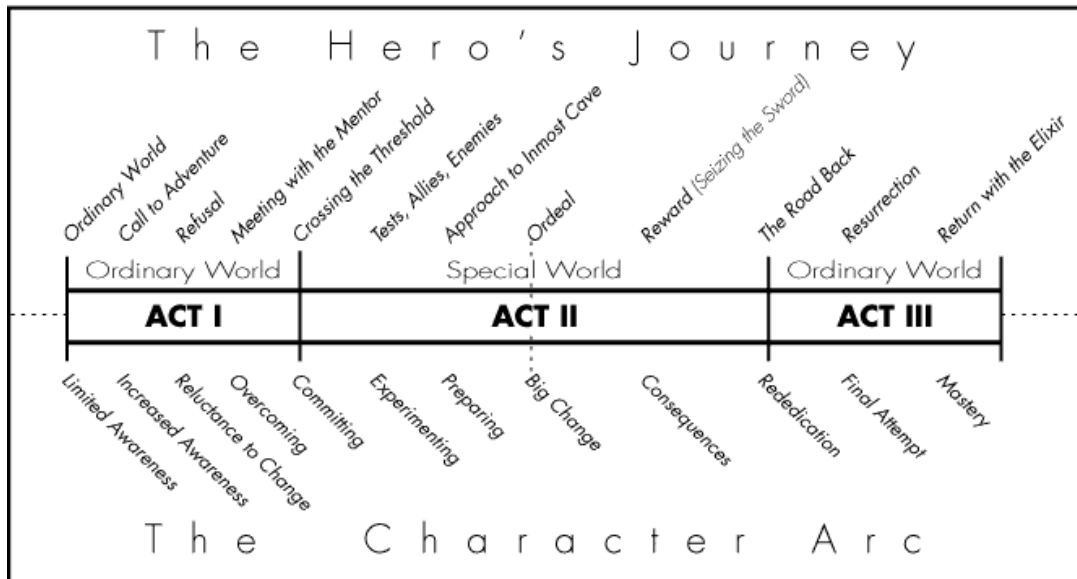


Illustration 2. Christopher Vogler’s “The Hero’s Journey”

This an important point for it will inform use of the Hero’s Journey as a map for organizational change and leadership formation. In seeking to build transformational leadership and find a church’s unique mission, success can be measured by the acceptance or approval by one’s own followers in the congregation. Vogler goes on to say that the stages of the Hero’s Journey can be used as “design template . . . or as a means of troubleshooting a story as you don’t follow the guidelines too rigidly . . . the joy of the journey is not reading or following a map, but exploring unknown places and wandering off the map now and then.”³⁷ For this project’s purpose, in organizational church leadership, “getting creatively lost, beyond the boundaries of tradition . . . [is where] new discoveries can be made.”³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 233.

³⁸ Ibid.

Mythic narratives were sometimes about the gods and goddesses – Zeus, Hades, Artemis, Athena, Poseidon, Hera and Persephone. There were also human heroes such as Hercules, Odysseus, Theseus, Perseus and Jason. In literature (folktales, fairytales, fables and legends) the mythic journey of the hero is often about transformation and about solving a problem. It is a pattern about life, growth and accomplishment. The journey characters take, and the challenges faced, are reflections of the problems all face in life. Campbell believed that literary genres were vehicles for conveying and reinforcing archetypes. In his essay, “Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art,” Campbell discusses the four functions of myth outlined earlier and finds the Hero’s Journey pattern in Occidental and Oriental sacred literature, from the *Upanishads* to the Bible. Campbell also examined different types of Hero’s Journey patterns in ancient classics such as *The Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *Odysseus*, *Homer*, and through the works of James Joyce in *Ulysses*. It is also found in tragic heroes such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Romeo and Juliet* and in romantic heroes such as in the *Legends of King Arthur*.³⁹

For example, in just British literature alone, such works as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Pygmalion*, *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*, *the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Faust*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Dracula* by B Stoker, *Tarzan* by E Burroughs, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre* by C Bronte.

The definitive work examining this subject is *The Hero’s Journey in Literature*.⁴⁰ The book is described as a detailed look at the Hero Journey from Antiquity, the Middle

³⁹ Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Dimension: Selected Essays 1959-1987*, ed. Antony Van Couvering (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).

⁴⁰ Evans Lansing Smith, *The Hero Journey in Literature: Parables of Poesis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997).

Ages and the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Naturalism and Modernism to Contemporary. The book focuses on the imagery of the rites of passage in human life (initiation at adolescence, mid-life and death).⁴¹

Evan Lansing Smith says, “The Hero Journey can be approached as a metaphor not only for the transformation of the society and self, but as a metaphor for the process by which stories are created (*poises*) and interpreted (*hermeneusis*).”⁴² The Hero’s Journey can be a roadmap for how to live one’s life; the creation of a life story and it can also be the metaphor for how to interpret life. The Hero’s Journey can also be the metaphor for the Church and the means by which to interpret and understand where the Church is on its unique calling towards its mission. This metaphor has the potential to create a dialogue between the Mission of the Church, as it has been written in the past, and a means to understand the Church’s future as it is yet to be lived.

There are many examples of world literature containing the Hero’s Journey. The goal here has been not an exhaustive analysis of how the Hero’s Journey is portrayed in literature but simply to affirm Campbell’s insights are a pattern found in world literature. There are some who disagree with Campbell’s conclusion, believing the monomyth is outdated, simplistic, forces a pattern where there is none, or fails to see uniqueness in the story. Nevertheless, Campbell found more similarity and universality than differences. His basic message is that there is more that unites people than separates them.

For this project, the mythic structure of the monomyth provides a valuable and practical model for understanding organizational leadership in the Christian Church. The

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., xvi.

Hero's Journey can be a metaphor, as well, for a church to enter into a process of exploring new directions, new leadership and new missions. There will be times of chaos and feelings of being lost for a church or its leadership, but the Hero's Journey can be a message to trust the path, to trust the journey, because at the end, there is a transformation that can bring healing.

The Hero's Journey as Applied in Social Sciences

This mythic structure is also found to be useful in the fields of the social sciences such as education, psychology and organizational development. Educators John Brown and Cerylle Moffett believe, “applying the conceptual lens of the archetypal heroic journey to the challenges we face in contemporary education can stimulate the personal and professional commitment needed for courageous action on the part of individuals, teams, and school communities. Metaphor has the power to kindle the imagination and touch the heart.”⁴³ Brown and Moffett have methodically looked at the Hero's Journey and applied most of the stages to the transformative process at the individual school level and at the larger school system level. They believe the collective wisdom of the Hero's Journey can be the key that unlocks educational transformation.

Like Brown and Moffett, it is my hope that the Hero's Journey metaphor can serve as an instrument for church leaders to: Create a shared vision and the action plan

⁴³ John L. Brown and Cerylle A. Moffett, *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999), xiii. “The ultimate Hero's Journey is an internal one—from innocence to awareness, from psychological dependency to personal responsibility, from indifference to intentionality, from blindness to vision, from fear to courage, and from a stance of neutrality to one of moral purpose.”⁴³ Educational communities, teacher, principal, staff developer, district office administrator, superintendent, professor of teacher education, parent, caregiver, or community member can all make the journey.⁴³ Brown and Moffett believe that the Hero's Journey can transcend cultures and can touch “individuals and groups at their emotional, moral, and spiritual core.”

needed to achieve it; Build commitment to implement a vision that already exists; and Initiate a rapid response to complex problems where no coordinating group, common language, or shared vision now exists.⁴⁴

Psychology

David Hartman and Diane Zimberoff believe that the Hero's Journey metaphor can serve as a map for psychological healing. The Hero's Journey can show "how to travel safely and successfully through the challenges of life, and to achieve one's own highest unique potential. The hero is the potential of every human being to follow the impulse to "something greater".⁴⁵ Because Jung influenced Campbell, perhaps it is not a surprise that Hartman and Zimberoff, psychologists, find the monomyth a useful model.

The first three stages of the Hero's Journey – "preparation, becoming one's authentic self and then claiming the 'treasure hard to attain' – can be seen in Jungian perspective as confronting one's shadows, working through the contra-sexual anima/animus elements within and encountering what he called the Mana-Personality."⁴⁶ In much of their essay, Hartman and Zimberoff are using a Jungian model of understanding the psyche, "the individual who sets out to answer the call must choose how far to go in that response: to fix up the battered ego to function better, or to "go for broke" pursuing personal transformation."⁴⁷ In a future chapter on trauma, this project will discuss in

⁴⁴ Ibid., ix.

⁴⁵ David Hartman and Diane Zimberoff, "The Hero's Journey of Self-Transformation," *Journal of Heart-Centered Therapies* 12:2 (2009): 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

more detail how the Hero's Journey can serve as a metaphor for the healing of trauma in one's life and that of an organization.

Gerard Lawson believes that the Hero's Journey is a good conceptual metaphor for counselors so they can assist the client's development.⁴⁸ Lawson says that when persons come for counseling it is often, because they have failed to cope with some stressor in life. The ability to deal with life challenges can produce even more stress and anxiety. Lawson says, "Rather than helping clients cope better with their problems, developmental approaches to counseling are designed to change how clients see the problems and their own role in discovering solutions."⁴⁹ Like a mentor or coach, the counselor acts like a "pacer," in this case, she would enhance the patient's ability to find solutions and adapt. Therefore, counseling is seen as a heroic journey where the patient is the author of the story.⁵⁰

Self-help literature, like Carol Pearson's, *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*, are good guides for using the Hero's Journey for better understanding personality structure. Pearson presents the archetypes of the Hero's Journey and discusses how they play a role in people's journeys. She offers insight into one's life situations in terms of heroic roles and archetypes. However, the main point of the book underscores how one can better live within that given role.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Gerard Lawson, "The Hero's Journey as a Developmental Metaphor in Counseling," *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling* 44 (Fall 2005): 134-44.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 144.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 140.

⁵¹ Carol Pearson, *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 1.

Organizational Development

Myths are stories about change; sometimes it is about a group change. Nick Oddy, an organizational consultant, believes that for an organization to change it needs to invest in leadership development, but what is often missed is the need for personal transformation in relation to the people managed. He continues:

It has long been recognized that the biggest impediment to successful change initiatives in organisations is the human dimension, how individuals change or adapt to new circumstances. Little progress has been made to properly address this with most change initiatives focusing on the structural elements at the organizational level, and on competency development at the individual level. The hero's journey is a far more organic structure that accurately reflects the archetypal challenges we all experience when dealing with significant change.⁵²

David Orange has proposed a change process, or model, he calls the “Organizational Hero’s Journey,” which is a “guide for individuals, groups, teams, and organizations desiring a future state.”⁵³ Orange borrows from the work of Organizational Development Consultant, Rebecca Chan Allen’s book, *Guiding Change Journeys*, which is an interpretation and application of Campbell’s Hero’s Journey.⁵⁴ Orange identifies seven stages in the Organizational Hero’s Journey: Call, Jump, Trials, Dissolution, Discovery, Integration, and Application.⁵⁵ Allen identifies eight stages in Campbell’s Hero’s Journey. A general comparison of Campbell’s Hero’s Journey and Allen’s (2002) Eight Stage “Archetypal Change Journey” follows:

⁵² Nick Oddy, “Transformational Leadership Is the Hero's Journey,” www.integral.org.au, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.integral.org.au/transformational-leadership-is-the-heros-journey>.

⁵³ David Orange, “Organizational Change as the Hero’s Journey White Paper,” www.iimagineservicedesign.com, September 2015, <http://www.iimagineservicedesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Organisational-Change-The-Heros-Journey.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Rebecca Chan Allen, *Guiding Change Journeys: A Synergistic Approach to Organization Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2002), 18.

⁵⁵ Orange, “Organizational Change as the Hero’s Journey White Paper,” 1.

Table 1. Allen's Eight Stage Archetypal Change Journey

Eight Stages	Campbell's hero's journey	Allen's (2002) archetypal change journey
Inertia	Status quo, stagnation, complacency in the realm	Organizational stagnation, being stuck, "mindlessly repeating an outmoded pattern of thinking and acting" (p. 52)
Call	The hero is called, impelled or pushed into journey	Loss of market share, customer dissatisfaction, new competition, new opportunities, "tried-and-true methods do not produce the expected results" (p. 65)
Jump	The hero decides to heed the call and go forth into the unknown	Organizational commitment to undergo a change initiative
Trials	The hero has to slay the dragon or monster (these could be internal demons)	"Organizations are tested physically, structurally, culturally, and emotionally in the trial cycle...Recognize this experience as the crucible of transformation" (p. 102)
Dissolution	A condition of transformation is a form of death, the letting go of the world, wealth, old ways of being and acting	Organizations let go of outmoded ways of thinking and acting, a form of death
Discovery	A boon, gift, or transformation is experienced or discovered by the hero	"An organization or person can perceive what was previously hidden from them...A new structure, a new culture, a new business, a new market is now realizable" (p. 148)
Integration	The hero returns to the world left behind, bringing the boon, gift, or transformative wisdom	"Incorporating the gift of discovery...reconciling differences...sustaining the system...creating a new vision" (p. 168)
Application	Boon, gift, or transformative wisdom is integrated and adapted by the world resulting in transformation	Dissemination of insights and innovations gained from the smaller system to the larger system

The Hero's Journey as Applied in Religion and Spirituality

Religion, spirituality and mythology all deal with a common theme of leaving one's old or current world, entering into a new period of initiation, transformation and

returning to his old world to bring the gift of a transformed self. A transformed self can better face the suffering and challenges of life with a community of others who have also made the journey. Religion and spirituality are always calling people to a heroic journey of bringing transformed selves to a place of healing and wisdom of a new ultimate reality.

This Hero's Journey has been lived out as a paradigm for followers of many of the world's religions. From Siddhartha Gautama to St. John of the Cross, mystics and spiritual directors have talked about the spiritual path as one of journey. There are countless books that use the metaphor of journey; it is part of the religious and spiritual vocabulary. Those in Christian ministry often speak of themselves as pilgrims—together, on a great journey through life and faith. People journey with awareness that each is a unique person, searching for her unique way so that she can make a difference in the world. Furthermore, throughout the world's religions, persons often see their role as one of helping others on their unique heroic journey of spiritual enlightenment.

The mythic Hero's Journey nurtures the soul and helps people find meaning and purpose in life. Throughout society there seems to be true desire for this type of purpose. The Church is one place people come searching for these deeper levels of meaning. The Church is a place where people confess sin, share in sufferings and live redemptively. The process of growing a soul, of developing a rich spiritual life, is within the community of faith; it is an exploration into God with other people. Religion and spirituality are about a journey together into God. The root of the word "religion" is literally "ligament." The essential meaning is "to bind;" which is what the Church should be about, the bringing of people into a deeper union with themselves and each other.

Religion and spirituality are terms often used interchangeably, but religion is associated with adjectives such as institutional, liturgical, formal, structural, doctrinal and authoritarian. Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.”⁵⁶ Whether they are “separate enterprises with no necessary connection, or “conflicting realities” or “two dimensions of a single enterprise” is not central to exploration of this topic. Suffice it to say that both religion and spirituality are concerned with providing a person with a sense of meaning, value and direction for their lives.⁵⁷ A future chapter on the healing of trauma will contend that embarking on a spiritual journey can benefit persons who are victims of trauma.

Spirituality is sometimes a code word for a vague, tenuous, noncommittal religion, an evasive term that may refer to little more than a warm, fuzzy feeling in the heart. Spirituality is often depicted as a technique or a practice that one adopts and works at privately, until the scales fall from one’s eyes. However, for Jews and Christians, the spirituality of the Bible, of Jesus, of the Church at its best is not like that; there is no such thing as a private spirituality. Christianity can be intensely personal, but it is never private. For Christians, the move from blindness to sight is not a mental move; people are not enlightened only or even principally by learning special spiritual techniques, like meditation or centering prayer. The process of growing a soul, of developing a rich

⁵⁶ Sandra Schneiders, “‘Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality’ 16,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality (Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion)*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 15-33.

⁵⁷ Sandra M. Schneiders, “Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum,” *Spiritus* 3:2 (2003): 173.

spiritual life, is within the community of faith; it is an exploration into God with other people.

The Hero's Journey is often initially pictured as a private journey, but actually, when looking at the journey of the hero, it is often done with others who are one's mentors, gurus or guides; it is hardly ever done alone or in private. Emile Durkheim learned that the primary purpose of religion in early societies was not only to put individuals in touch with God, but also to put them in touch with each other.⁵⁸ The Hero's Journey is not just about the personal gains or transformation of the hero, but it also is about the community from where the hero came and the boon to that same community upon their return home.

The Hero's Journey can remind the Church of her reason for being. While being a place of beliefs about God, Christ and humanity, it is preeminently a community of people who challenge one another in becoming more human. This includes principles such as sharing, loving and forgiveness. Her people are bound to one another. As such, a private spiritual journey lacks many of the essentials necessary for the soul to grow. People use the language of personal stories, journeying with God or where God was found on a journey. Ministers often use language of "being on a faith journey," and being open to new, unexpected and incomprehensible things that God desires to do in one's life and that of the Church. Ministers also preach about biblical heroes who remain examples for people of today. These heroes engaged in conflict and suffered trauma, but accomplished amazing deeds done "by faith." Among this "cloud of witnesses" are

⁵⁸ Robert B. Fox, "The Function of Religion in Society," *Practical Anthropology* 6:5 (October): 212-18, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/009182965900600503>.

martyrs, military leaders, prophets, kings, women and men who trusted in God and persevered through all that life sent their way. All of this leads to a Church familiar with the vocabulary of journey and heroes. The Bible and Saints throughout history have lived out the Hero's Journey. From Joseph and Moses to Jesus and Paul, their lives and the lives of many in the Bible are the very personification of the Hero's Journey metaphor. The Bible is filled with examples of willing heroes, reluctant heroes and tragic heroes. One could write an endless number of pages citing examples where biblical characters' lives paralleled the Hero's Journey metaphor. However, the focus is the Christian Church, its leaders and the challenges of Christians as they face conflict, change and trauma in their churches.

The Hero's Journey, like the Christian journey then, is about a relationship, a dialogue in a community with human contact. The hero never really journeys alone. The hero lives life with and for others, being aware of her own limitations, vision, insight and perception. Here again, people often preach about not giving up, moving forward, not looking back keep on keeping on, and to look to the great heroes of the faith. Paul's letters are often filled with admonitions to young Christian communities about struggling through enduring persecution and hardship. They say to focus on Jesus, keep one's eyes fixed on him; he has been down this road that's ahead of you. Being faithful is not a walk in the park; it is a heroic journey, a marathon race. Jesus made the journey with the amulets of honesty and truth, persevering into conflict and death. Jesus as the hero confronted hatred, corruption and the rigidity of people in Jerusalem. Conflict happens in following Jesus. To be a heroic passionate follower of Jesus means that one's devotion and faith will be mocked by the world. Families, Jesus warns, will be divided when some

hear the call to be faithful and others do not. Leaving behind sin and moral failure can be the catalyst to lead one to repent and spiritually return to God. When people choose to live in the Lord, when they decide not to quit on life, they can be transformed, and are put into a new relationship with God, and see themselves able to live to their fullest potential. They persevere in the race, never giving up, for God's grace will be released. But, God journeys with his people; it is not human effort alone. This is the heroic message of Christianity.

The Christian life is modeled on the Hero's Journey. A Christian journey might look like this: a person senses there is more to life, feels emptiness or brokenness because of sin and senses the call to adventure, to something more, perhaps to the idea of God. However, the hero is uncertain about God, religion and Christianity, and with the encouragement and support of a mentor or community of faith, they cross the threshold and accept faith in Jesus and begin their journey in a church community. Soon the new Christian experiences the challenges of being faithful, with discouragement, disillusion and doubts arriving. But, if the new Christian faces those battles and chooses a disciplined life of prayer, sacramental life in a community of faith and the study of Scriptures, the ordeals are overcome and the experience of the power of resurrection are experienced. Along with it, the rewards of passionate life and trust in Christ emerges, only to return to the community of faith as disciple, mentor and minister to others also seeking Christ. A life in Christ can be seen as a circular journey, lived not just once, but continually, with deeper levels of heroic change and intimacy with God. Departure from the old life, initiation into a new life and returning to help others in their journey of faith

is the journey of the followers of Christ. It is also the story of Christ and countless saints in the Church.

Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest and popular author, has written beautifully about the Hero's Journey as a spiritual journey in his book, *Falling Upward*. In it he describes, "The classic hero is one who 'goes the distance,' whatever that takes, and then has plenty left over for others. True heroism serves the common good, or it is not really heroism at all."⁵⁹ Rohr very much sees the Christian spiritual life, and that of other spiritual founders and saints to be reflective of the Hero's Journey. Seeing life as stages, a first half and a second half, is similar to Campbell and many psychologist's understanding of life happening in stages and initiations. Rohr says that, "What looks like falling can largely be experienced as falling upward and onward, into a broader and deeper world where the soul has found its fullness, is finally connected to the whole and lives inside the Big Picture."⁶⁰ Rohr believes that each person has a unique divine "blueprint" in his soul and that his task in life is to find his "True Self" and live it out in the second half of his life. Thus, his life is a journey to live out his unique mission through a journey of loss and renewal, of "falling down and coming up."⁶¹ This is reminiscent of Jung's concept of individuation and the becoming of one's unique self. The Hero's Journey is the same story, it is a venturing out of one's safe world, encountering chaos and loss, only to return transformed and ready for the challenges of the new world. It is a story of loss and renewal, sin and repentance, trauma and healing.

⁵⁹ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 20.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 153.

⁶¹ Ibid., xv-xxv.

Jung said, “What happens in the life of Christ happens always and everywhere. In the Christian archetype all lives of this kind are prefigured.”⁶² Christ becomes a universal archetype for humanity; his life is a paradigm for life. Edward Edinger says, “The life of Christ, understood psychologically, represents the vicissitudes of the Self as it undergoes incarnation in an individual ego and of the ego as it participates in that divine drama. . . . Christ represents the process of individuation.”⁶³ His book, *The Christian Archetype*, looks at Jesus’ life through the stages of the Hero’s Journey. A summary of the images is as follows:

God’s preexistent, only-begotten Son empties himself of his divinity and is incarnated as a man through the agency of the Holy Ghost who impregnates the Virgin Mary. He is born in humble surroundings accompanied by numinous events and survives grave initial dangers. When he reaches adulthood he submits to baptism by John the Baptist and witnesses the descent of the Holy Ghost signifying his vocation. He survives temptation by the Devil and fulfills his ministry, which proclaims a benevolent, loving God and announces the coming of the “Kingdom of Heaven.” After agonizing uncertainty, he accepts his destined fate and allows himself to be arrested, tried, flagellated, mocked and crucified. After three days in the tomb, according to many witnesses, he is resurrected. For forty days he walks and talks with his disciples and then ascends to heaven. Ten days later, at Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descends, the promised Paraclete.⁶⁴

Edinger illustrates the circular Hero’s Journey in this manner.⁶⁵

⁶² As quoted in Edinger, *The Christian Archetype*, 7.

⁶³ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 17.

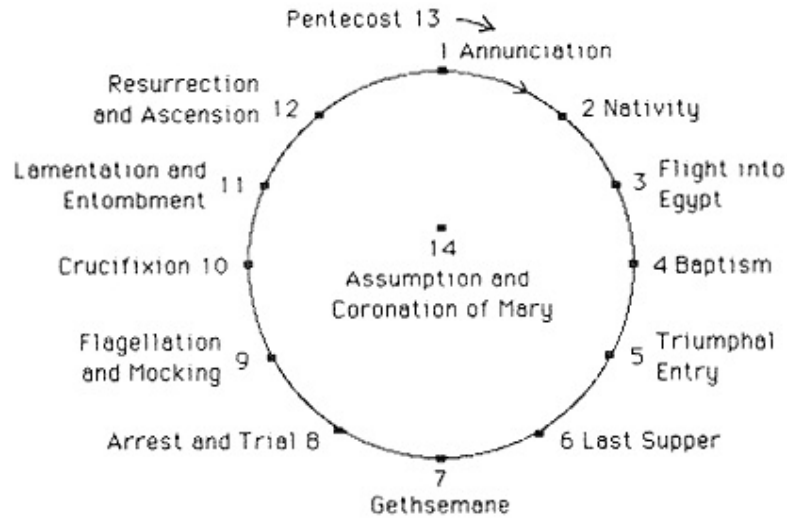


Illustration 3. Edinger's Circular Hero's Journey

Edinger further says that the Church, as far as it the Body of Christ, is also called to express this same Divine blueprint: "The Church as the body of Christ is then destined to live out collectively the same sequence of images as did Christ."⁶⁶ If the Hero's Journey is a formula of living, then it appears to make sense that life is a container for this pattern. It would seem that there is a natural order or natural law as Thomas Aquinas argued. Christ and the Church are, therefore, following a divine order, a synchronistic flow of separation, initiation and return. What is being explored in this dissertation may not be so surprising. Like Rohr, I believe that life happen in stages, for Christ, the Church and God's people. If we can understand those stages and where we are in them, then perhaps it can be useful in dealing with change, conflict and trauma in the Church to find transformative healing.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

Myth is an interesting term that evokes a variety of definitions. Myths tell about the inner landscape of the self, a sort of map of one's origins and self. Myths are ways to make meaning of the world. They are windows to beliefs, principles and fears. Some myths are about the sacred stories of the world that are hidden from the awakened-self and embody questions and answers about one's own origins. Both Freud and Jung believed that myth had the potential to reveal, through dreams, something about the psyche. Campbell saw four functions to myth—metaphysical, cosmological, sociological and psychological—which reveal aspects to personhood, cosmos, world, civilization, and nature. Myths are the rubrics for understanding one's place within the Universe.

The intersection of Jung and Campbell was a huge contribution to psychological self-understanding. The consciousness, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious formed the map of the psyche. They find their expression in symbols, dreams and mythology. The collective unconscious would reveal what Jung called the Archetype that would serve for Campbell to formulate the universal symbolic pattern he would call the "monomyth." The "monomyth," or The Hero's Journey, is a map of inner selves, a universal diagram of all stories, because they are all uniquely also inside of each person.

This chapter examined the powerful Hero's Journey as metaphor for transformation for the individual leader and organization, a story of separation, initiation and return. The stages of the Hero's Journey exploded in hero movies out of Hollywood and the world's literature. From Greek myths to the biblical hero's, the heroes face what all face in life, the conquest and the mastery of the self to serve humanity.

The Hero's Journey has seen its application to the fields of social sciences and psychology as both fields are concerned with questions of leaving the old set of rules for operating, and finding a new vision and commitment to go forward as a transformed individual or organization, to bring the benefits of change and healing.

This chapter looked at how organizational consultants in both business and education are using the Hero's Journey to lead organizations through change to find their unique visionary direction. These maps presented above may give a metaphorical lens to envision the journey that both a leader and an organization must embark on to discover the unique vision and mission of a church.

Lastly, the power of religion and spirituality is that participation in them has the power to bind and transform people and the Church, as the Hero's Journey exemplifies. The Hero's Journey, like religion, has the power to transform. The goal of the Hero's Journey is to journey successfully through trials and challenges of life and to attain one's own maximum unique possibility. The hero is called to transform and that moves all with hope.

PART TWO

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

CHAPTER 3

STAGE I: SEPARATION AND PREPARATION

The Ordinary World

The Hero's Journey begins for the protagonist as departure or separation from a home that is known and familiar. However, before the hero departs, in the hero is revealed in her home world. Readers see the hero in her present status quo, perhaps struggling with central questions, longings and the problems the hero will resolve because of going on a journey. Stuart Voytilla says, "Every story involves a problem or Central Dramatic Question that disrupts the Ordinary World. The Hero must enter the Special World to solve the problem, answer the dramatic question, and return balance. The Ordinary World allows the storyteller to contrast the Ordinary and Special worlds."¹ Future chapters will explore how each of these stages may be characterized for persons and for congregations.

¹ Stuart Voytilla, *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 1999), 13.

The Call to Adventure

Something happens now that disturbs the status quo of the ordinary world of the hero; it is either something from the outside world, some external pressures or something surfaces from within. An imbalance exists and something is amiss. A call comes to the potential hero: a problem, a challenge, or an adventure comes by some extraordinary experience, encounter or epiphany. A messenger of sorts appears to announce or “herald” the call to adventure.² Campbell writes, “The herald’s summons may be to live . . . or to die. It may sound the call to some high historical undertaking. Or, it may mark the dawn of religious illumination . . . the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.”³ This is a time of awakening to a new reality. Life looks different now; it may be a time of reversal of one’s hopes and dreams, a failure in a committed relationship, illness, work or a death in the family. This can manifest itself as a time of emotional, spiritual or psychological crisis, which creates an imbalance or restlessness in the self. It can also be a traumatic event for a person. Campbell states it this way:

But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration, a rite, or moment of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.⁴

The comfort of the known and ordinary world is gone. Life has changed. Something is missing, an imbalance or there has been a loss. However, this imbalance is a time of transition and opportunity; the hero is not yet aware of need for change and

² Frank Munoz, “Visionary Leadership as the Hero’s Journey” (Course Project, Visionary Leadership for the Church, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017), 10.

³ Campbell, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 42.

⁴ Ibid., 42-43.

growth. The hero's journey may go through an assortment of settings. Campbell eloquently articulates it:

The "call to adventure" signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, a lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight.⁵

Standing at the abyss of the unknown, the hero may be reluctant but must choose whether to go forward on this journey of transformation. The hero willingly or unwillingly is offered the opportunity. Nevertheless, the hero always in essence, retains the freedom of will and faces a choice; he may decide not to venture on the journey.

Refusal of the Call

The hero may think and feel he is not up to the challenge of the journey the set before him. The hero may not recognize the moment as a call to adventure and deny he has the ability to move beyond the ordinary world of his home. The hero may not want to advance on the journey because he does not want to lose the status, control, the station, the influence and paradigms or boxes he lives in; the rejection may simply come from fear of the unknown. Campbell said, "Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or "culture," the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved."⁶

Os Guinness says, "Human identity is neither fixed nor final in this life. It is incomplete. As such we may refuse the call, remain stunted – unresponsive and

⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁶ Ibid., 49.

irresponsible. Or we may respond to the call and rise to become the magnificent creatures only one Caller calls us to be.”⁷ Sometimes the refusal of the call comes because the hero does not want to believe that there has been a change in the world of comfort. It is a denial that the old reality has changed, a refusal to let things go in order to embrace a new reality found only by going on the journey and accepting the call. To go on a journey is a scary thing and most people do not like being scared. To refuse the call is to run away from that which leads to one’s best self. It is postponing one’s life, if not wasting it. It can lead to the development of more problems and to a new crisis. Guinness continues, “The myths and folk tales of the whole world make clear that the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest. The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting series of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure.”⁸

Not only are there inner voices of self-doubt that fuel the refusal of the call, often other supporting characters also attempt to urge the hero not to go forth on the journey and stay behind and rejoin the herd. For example, in the movie *Star Wars*, Luke’s uncle reminds him he has obligations at home. Any review of movies and literature is full of these characters that act as prophets of predicted disaster. For the potential hero to listen to these warnings before the journey even has begun is surely the end.

⁷ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: W Pub. Group, 2003), 24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

Supernatural Aid

If the potential hero accepts the call to adventure, before the hero goes on the journey, she receives assistance. At this point, there is usually an encounter with a mentor who shows up typically as a wise little old man, a gnome, a disembodied voice or she is visited by a fairy godmother that provides some kind of amulet that helps guide and protect the hero.¹ This may be a sword, a wand, or simply encouragement to assist in the venture towards the unknown. Campbell says, “The hero to whom such a helper appears is typically one who has responded to the call.”² The helper is someone who has gone on a similar journey to the unknown before and so understands the challenges that lie ahead. He goes on to add that, “What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny. . . . One has only to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear. Having responded to his own call, and continuing to follow courageously as the consequences unfold, the hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at his side.”³

Brown and Moffett make an important point that although one may journey with others he needs to remember, “The great myths and legends remind us that external gurus and wisdom figures are only projections and personifications of our own personal and collective selves.”⁴ Although people do not journey alone, all one’s potential and power to be a hero lies within. The hero ventures with others who act as catalysts to the hero within that will appear at the right moment when the challenges seem insurmountable.

¹ Munoz, *Visionary Leadership*, 17.

² Campbell, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 59.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 104.

The Crossing of the First Threshold

It is time to cross the threshold; the biggest part of the mythic journey begins, the hero leaves all behind, moves to the limits of her known world, and is met by a guardian. This gatekeeper acts as a guardian to a zone of great mystery and power. This is a place of uncertainty.⁵ Campbell describes them as “threshold guardians:”

With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. . . . Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe. The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored.⁶

These “threshold guardians” appear in many forms and roles to discover if the hero is equipped for the journey. The appearance of the threshold guardians can also be seen as one of testing the inner psychological resources the hero may have. Often, they act as gatekeepers and test the hero’s spirit and courage before they may go on the journey. They might appear as an ogre to warn off the hero before going into the forest.⁷ Campbell writes, “The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades.”⁸ This is the big emotional point of no return, when the fears and doubts of leaving one’s comfort zone and moving into the zone of the unknown are overcome.

⁵ Munoz, *Visionary Leadership*, 18.

⁶ Campbell, *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 64.

⁷ Ibid., 69-72.

⁸ Ibid., 67-68.

The Belly of the Whale

The hero has entered into a new world now enveloped in a mysterious darkness; Campbell uses the story of Jonah to describe it as entering into the “belly of the whale.”

This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation. . . . But here . . . the hero goes inward, to be born again. The disappearance corresponds to the passing of a worshiper into a temple where he is to be quickened by the recollection of who and what he is, namely dust and ashes unless immortal. The temple interior, the belly of the whale, and the heavenly land beyond, above, and below the confines of the world, are one and the same.⁹

What may look like entering into a place of death and darkness can be the actual entrance into a place of life and light. The hero enters into a place where new energy is created, a place of transformation. In Bill Moyers’ interview of Campbell, he describes it this way:

In the first stage of this kind of adventure, the hero leaves the realm of the familiar, over which he has some measure of control, and comes to a threshold, let us say the edge of a lake or sea, where a monster of the abyss comes to meet him. There are then two possibilities. In a story of the Jonah type, the hero is swallowed and taken into the abyss to be later resurrected - a variant of the death-and-resurrection theme.¹⁰

This stage is a symbolic letting go of the past and an entering into a new future. As seen in later chapters, this is a critical stage in the life of a congregational leader, in the life a church undergoing conflict or looking for visionary direction in search of its mission. This is a passage through an abyss, a departure from the hero’s comfort zone. The hero must face this existential darkness without surrendering to it.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Campbell and Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, 180.

CHAPTER 4

STAGE II: INITIATION AND JOURNEY TO THE SPECIAL WORLD

The Road of Trials

The hero has crossed from the familiar, ordinary world and has entered a new realm of enchantment and allure where she encounters a series of adventures, trials and tribulations. Campbell writes:

Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials . . . miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage.¹

Campbell thought this stage of the journey might be long but not dull, because the hero will face many adventures with each trial possibly being more difficult than the last and with each test the hero develops in conviction and competence. These tests are a place where vulnerabilities are exposed that up until now had not been known. However, with each test, the hero grows to understand the decisive and critical goal the hero must attain on the journey. For the hero, these may be significant outward physical challenges or they might be inward psychological challenges. Campbell says, “The trials are

¹ Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 81.

designed to see to it that the intending hero should really be a hero. Is he/she really a match for this task? Can he/she overcome the dangers? Does he/she have the courage, the knowledge, the capacity to enable him/her to serve?”²

For Campbell, this means changing the way one thinks about himself; it is a revelation and “transformation of consciousness.”³ These trials of personal inner change are preceded by fear and denial. It can be seen as a period of suffering that is transformative. St. John of the Cross called it “the Dark Night of the Soul.” It is a period of inner self-doubt, of wishing one had never gone on this journey in the first place and longing for a time when there was no adventure or journey to go on. The fear and temptation to quit may come from outside or from within and urge one to turn away from her path.

The first tests may be easy, but they grow in intensity and build the hero with greater skills for the greater challenges yet to come. This stage of physical, psychological and spiritual doubt is actually a process of breakthrough to wisdom and transformation. This is a period of looking deeply at anxiety, wounds and the barriers to growth the hero has been afraid of facing. This will be discussed further in regard to the transformation of trauma and suffering. Staying here in this stage and tenaciously facing the darkness is the key to personal and transformational development. It is staying true to the choice, counting with darkness all around. This is the time to give up the right to quit. Campbell continues, “Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, again,

² Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 154.

³ Ibid., 155.

and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land.”⁴

Facing the Abyss

Even though a future chapter on Visionary Leadership will merge these next five stages, it is helpful to do a brief overview to understand better the complex model that is the Hero’s Journey. The Hero’s Journey for the purposes of this project is less mythological and more transformational or psychological. Campbell says, “What all myths have to deal with is transformations of consciousness of one in or another. You have been thinking one way. You have now to think in a different way.”⁵ Inner forces that are mythologically expressed in male and female archetypes in Campbell’s model represent this transformation of consciousness.

In the “Meeting with the Goddess” stage, the hero meets a goddess that “represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know.”⁶ She symbolizes love and the source of life and may be a mother, sister or beloved:

As the hero is initiated into life, the goddess becomes transfigured through his understanding. Alas, those with inferior eyes cannot see her magnificence – they may even perceive her as ugly. While the goddess can never be greater than the hero, she always promises more than he can comprehend. The hero can take her as she is and thus be the king of her created world. Through the goddess, the hero attains mastery over life itself. His trials have prepared him to recognize the richness of life that She offers.⁷

⁴ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 90.

⁵ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 155.

⁶ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 97.

⁷ Lynne Milum, “The Hero’s Journey: A Campbellian Look at the Metaphorical Path to Personal Transformation,” MythicHero.com, accessed April 1, 2019, http://mythichero.com/what_is_mythology.html.

The goddess may be experienced as good or evil but she helps the hero find success in his upcoming trials. The hero may experience a “mystical marriage.” This is a period of deep inner challenge for the hero to be worthy to win and eventually claim the treasure. Campbell writes, “The meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love (charity: *amor fati*), which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity.”⁸

“Woman as Temptress” represents the hero’s encounter with the negative side of the woman. Milum says, the “Hero finds himself occupied with selfish pleasures. The ease with which the hero falls into temptation places the path to enlightenment in peril. While the purified hero will be repulsed by these offerings, the struggling hero must soar beyond the sin and despair, to regain his path.”⁹ Here the woman is a symbol of the material and physical temptations of life.

Atonement with the Father is a stage where the hero must confront a possible male entity that holds ultimate power. In many myths, a father figure holds the power of life and death. It may be seen as a competitive struggle for self-mastery:

Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id). However, this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, and that is what is difficult. One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy. Therewith, the center of belief is transferred outside of the bedeviling god’s tight scaly ring, and the dreadful ogres dissolve.¹⁰

⁸ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 99.

⁹ Milum, “The Hero’s Journey.”

¹⁰ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 107-110.

It can be seen as well as an entry into adulthood. Milum says, “A father figure may be portrayed as the vengeful male threatened by the rise of the hero and so establishes a horrifying conflict. The hero seeks atonement or ‘at-one-ment’ with the father.”¹¹ Campbell continues:

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned.¹²

This atoned self is a transformed self that has conquered fears, faced death and has emerged with new courage. Childhood dependency has given way to an independent mature person. The father figure helps the transition for the hero to assume the role of the father and replace him. This is a new way of thinking and being. After a person is “at-one” with herself she is ready for transformation into the new world.

Apotheosis is a stage where the hero arrives at place of total selflessness, of self-giving and self-emptying. In some myths it is “deification or realization of the essence of life and ultimate purpose.”¹³ It has been a transformation from life to death and back to life. In some myths, it is a period of rest and peace before the hero returns. Campbell talks about it as being in a state “free of all fear, beyond the reach of change.”¹⁴

During these four stages, the hero has had to be fully committed to the mission and surrender to the journey. This would not be a time of half-hearted loyalty; it is a time

¹¹ Milum, “The Hero’s Journey.”

¹² Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 125.

¹³ Milum, “The Hero’s Journey.”

¹⁴ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 127.

of life or death choices where the hero may not show the tiniest break in allegiance to the journey. It is a time to stay the course against incredible odds. When the hero makes the choice to give up the right to quit and makes the decision to hold on, that is when the hero is on the verge of being transformed and of new energy being released into the hero's life. The Hero's Journey has come with a cost, but it also has brought the hero a new life with "free of all fear" with the vitality and passion.¹⁵ As Campbell summarizes:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his common-day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure . . . the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him. . . . When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. . . . The final work is that of the return . . . the boon that he brings restores the world (elixir).¹⁶

The Ultimate Boon

This is the achievement of the journey. The demons and the dragons have been faced and slain. The ego has been surrendered to self-mastery. Everything that has occurred on the journey led to this transformative step to purify and prepare the hero. In many myths, there is reception of an elixir or immortality. Campbell says, "The gods and goddesses . . . are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir of Imperishable Being but not themselves the Ultimate in its primary state. What the hero seeks through his intercourse with them is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance."¹⁷ Therefore, this is the "benefit, favor or blessing . . . for the hero to share the boon with humankind, whether it is an elixir of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 211.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

immortality, a holy grail, true love, perfect knowledge, or the meaning of life . . .

illumination that there is an indestructible life beyond the physical body. This

Immortality is timeless and experienced in the here and now.”¹⁸

Like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, the hero’s power was present all along; for Dorothy to return home all she had to do was click her heels and say, “there is no place like home.” Campbell says, “For now it appears that the perilous journey was a labor not of attainment but of retainment, not discovery but rediscovery. The godly powers sought and dangerously won are revealed to have been within the heart of the hero all the time.”¹⁹ The Hero’s Journey has been all along about self-discovery and transformation.

¹⁸ Milum, “The Hero’s Journey.”

¹⁹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 30.

CHAPTER 5

STAGE 3: RETURN

The third and final phase of the Hero's Journey is called the Return. There are, in fact, six steps in this stage of Campbell's work: Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live. This stage is often the most difficult because the hero may have been transformed on the journey and must reconstruct his new identity in the old community from where he came.

Refusal of the Return

Heroes, have at times, been tempted not to return with the boon, staying instead in the place where the treasure was found and "have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being."¹ Hartman and Zimmeroff surmise that hero may have been selfish and not have had the best purpose for originally going on the journey "or a lack of commitment to the community from which the hero departed. Or the hero may have learned something along the journey to compel him to

¹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 167.

redirect his course.”² The hero may have doubts that those in his former world will understand what he has seen, heard or experienced and may not appreciate the treasure the hero now can bring.

Many enlightened spiritual seekers have been tempted to remain on the mountain either because they fear others will not accept their newfound wisdom and serenity they are now in possession of or the place they have discovered. This is reminiscent of Peter, James and John wishing to build tabernacles for Jesus, Elijah and Moses at the Transfiguration. There were some moments one wants to freeze and capture forever, like an endless summer vacation, but the hero is called to come down off the mountain and serve in the valley below. The true hero must overcome the lure to stay and accept the obligation to share the ultimate boon.

The Magic Flight

The hero, accepting the responsibility to return, now leaves the land of the supernatural world of adventure and bliss. Campbell says that there are two ways the hero can leave this special world. If the hero was led on her journey by a god or other supernatural force, the return may be easy. He writes:

If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron. On the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion.³

² Hartman and Zimmeroff, “The Hero's Journey of Self-Transformation,” 26.

³ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 170.

Rescue from Without

Campbell talks about the hero as a reluctant person who does not want to abandon the bliss or treasure and must be pulled back to the ordinary world with its burdens. Some supernatural force or guide may have to enable the return if the hero has been wounded or from a seeming death. He writes:

The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him. For the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state. . . . And yet, in so far as one is alive, life will call. Society is jealous of those who remain away from it, and will come knocking at the door. If the hero . . . is unwilling, the disturber suffers an ugly shock; but on the other end, if the summoned one is only delayed—sealed in by the beatitude of the state of perfect being (which resembles death)—an apparent rescue is effected, and the adventurer returns.⁴

The rescue may be a necessary stage, especially if the hero has been wounded in the journey. If the hero did not want to return, this could be a final battle for a decided ending. The rescue comes from the ordinary world, coming to save the hero from remaining in the mystical supernatural world.

The Crossing of the Return Threshold

The journey narrative comes full circle with the hero having left the extraordinary world to return home with the treasure. The hero is returning with a transformed self (ego) to impart this awareness for the benefit of his home world. This return does not come without difficulties. Campbell says, “How to teach again, however, what has been taught correctly and incorrectly learned a thousand times, throughout the millenniums of

⁴ Ibid., 178-179.

mankind's prudent folly? That is the hero's ultimate difficult task."⁵ As one who has experienced a mystical experience, it has occurred to me the difficulty of communicating such transformative experiences in ordinary language. Campbell goes on to say,

Many failures attest to the difficulties of this life-affirmative threshold. The first problem of the returning hero is to accept as real, after an experience of the soul-satisfying vision of fulfillment, the passing joys and sorrows, banalities and noisy obscenities of life. Why re-enter such a world? Why attempt to make plausible, or even interesting, to men and women consumed with passion, the experience of transcendental bliss?⁶

There is great risk for the returning hero as rejection, frustration and disillusionment are possible outcomes. The hero has to understand that the ordinary world has not changed; he has changed and must be patient to teach his newfound enlightenment. In some cases, the hero returns to transform his old world and create something totally new. It may involve a sort of reconciliation: "This is the sign of the hero's requirement, now, to knit together his two worlds."⁷ This brings together the human and the divine, the mystical and the ordinary. Campbell points out however that these kingdoms of the unknown and the known are really one: "Nevertheless—and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol—the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know."⁸ When the hero crosses the threshold, he comes to see that the separation is false and sees reality for what it truly is and he is ready for the last stage in his journey.

⁵ Ibid., 188.

⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁷ Ibid., 196.

⁸ Ibid., 188.

Master of the Two Worlds

Here the task of the hero is to communicate the discoveries made on the journey as one of an inward and outward passage between the two worlds: “Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master.”⁹ In mythology, heroes are often seen as having the ability to travel between the transcendent immortal world and immanent mortal world. Campbell goes on to quote the entire Transfiguration story from Mark’s Gospel as an example of Jesus’ revelation of the transcendent world to mortal beings.¹⁰ He writes, “Here is the whole myth in a moment: Jesus the guide, the way, the vision, and the companion of the return. The disciples are his initiates, not themselves masters of the mystery, yet introduced to the full experience of the paradox of the two worlds in one.”¹¹ The eternal moments are but a glimpse into the transcendent world that life comes out of death. The hero has learned and she has the power or wisdom that the past flows out into a future and that it is possible to travel back and forth.¹² Campbell concludes:

The meaning is very clear; it is the meaning of all religious practice. The individual, through prolonged psychological disciplines, gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment. His personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever

⁹ Ibid., 196.

¹⁰ Ibid., 197.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 198.

may come to pass in him; he becomes, that is to say, an anonymity. The Law lives in him with his unreserved consent.¹³

The hero may find some people who are incapable of comprehending because they are stuck in the physical ordinary world, but some will hear the call and go on the adventure.

Freedom to Live

The hero is now able to return to the point of origin and can blend the mechanisms of old with the new into one world, the world where the hero now lives. The old self had to “die” in order for the new self to emerge with a life to begin again. There is no fear of change; instead, there is the insight that one must live in the moment. Campbell writes, “The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he is ‘Before Abraham was, I AM.’ He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment (or of the “other thing”), as destroying the permanent with its change. . . . Thus the next moment is permitted to come to pass.”¹⁴ Fearing death no more, the hero is free to live. Change requires death to old ways and this is hard. Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:24-26) Jesus used this seed imagery to communicate one of the most powerful statements about his own death, but he also used this image as a metaphor for fullness of life. The hero has awakened to know that the

¹³ Ibid., 204.

¹⁴ Ibid., 209.

moments when people can gain the most freedom, live life with the greatest passion and possibility, is also when they cling to and attempt to save their old life.

Campbell says, “‘What, now, is the result of the miraculous passage and return’? The battlefield is symbolic of the field of life, where every creature lives on the death of another.”¹⁵ The Hero’s Journey is an organic recovery of the self with the power that lies at the heart of the universe. This unity may come with greater self-knowledge, clarity and reflection on the changes that are required for real transformation. Campbell boldly declares, “The goal of the myth is to dispel the need for such life ignorance by effecting a reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will. And this is effected through a realization of the true relationship of the passing phenomena of time to the imperishable life that lives and dies in all.”¹⁶ For the hero, the journey has been always an adventure of self-discovery rather than courage, where the hero “learn(s) to recognize the positive values in what appear to be the negative moments and aspects of your life. The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty yes to your adventure.”¹⁷

Implications for Applied Church Leadership

The Hero’s Journey invites people to look at the Church in a new way, not as a static institution, resistant to change, but as an adventurous community open to its calling and going forth into the unknown to struggle with the forces of change to a renewal and the fulfillment of its unique mission. Inherently people deeply resist change. A church that operates out of a status quo, stagnant mentality, is a church on a deathwatch. The

¹⁵ Ibid., 205.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 206.

ultimate purpose of the Hero's Journey for the Church is its transformation into the community it was originally founded to be, the reconciliation of humanity to God. The Church is called to be the "repairers of the breach." The Episcopal Church says its mission is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."¹⁸ For this mission to happen, a church must leave the safety of its comfortable way of doing things, be open to visionary struggles of change, and bravely face the challenges before it so that it may be restored to the realization of its mission. The Church can be a messy business, so uniformity and agreement are not its hallmark. Nevertheless, the Church should be about binding people together in community.

The paradox for the Church is that it is called to go on the Hero's Journey over and over again, for its continued renewal and growth. The Church is called to be heroic because it is facing questions and challenges from the secular world. Church leaders are called to be heroic like the heroes of Campbell's universal myth. They are men and women who have been able to overcome their personal, psychological, cultural and organizational limitations on behalf of God's mission of reconciliation and love.

This project will discuss in more detail the Church and the implications of the Hero's Journey for Church leadership; however, the whole point of the adventure for the leadership of a church at the congregational level is transformation and healing. Church leaders who are courageous enough to accept the call to go on the Hero's Journey, battle the ego, practice change principles and become the leaders the church needs them to be will discover its true mission, is its treasure. This is the sacred responsibility of Church leadership - to help congregational leaders find the unique mission of their individual

¹⁸ The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 855.

churches. Church leaders, who go on a journey, confront darkness and dragons, will discover not only their true selves but also the true mission of the church they lead. It is a quest filled with hope, personal responsibility, shared vision and collective wisdom so that the Church may find its unique mission and face the challenges the Church finds in the world today.

The Hero's Journey is a metaphor that goes beyond time and space and finds the emotional, moral and spiritual core. It can unite people instead of divides them. It can show people a shared story at the deepest levels. Building on this sense of shared story, churches can become communities with inclusive and compelling visions for action in the world.

The next section will look at how the Hero's Journey can be applied to some of the key issues facing Church leaders; conflict transformation, the healing of trauma and visionary leadership.

PART THREE

LEADERSHIP AS VISIONARY JOURNEY

CHAPTER 6

HERO'S JOURNEY AND LEADERSHIP LEADER ON THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

The question to be explored going forward is whether the Hero's Journey template can teach people how to travel through the challenges of not only personal transformation but organizational transformation and visionary leadership so that a leader and congregation can each achieve their own highest potential. The hope is to view the Hero's Journey as a lens, whereby, the hero as leader is able to recognize and apply those timeless mythic insights to the task of visionary leadership, and to explore how the Hero's Journey and Mancini's *Vision Pathway* can serve as compatible maps for the work of navigating change, managing conflict and fulfilling the church's mission.

Stage I: Separation/Preparation in the Leadership Journey

The Call to Adventure

A problem must be identified if a leader is to go on a heroic journey of transformation. It is a call to pay attention, to hear a call to change because a problem has been identified. The unconscious innocence that once was, is about to be lost. It is the

precursor to the call to adventure. Vogler reminds readers of “STAR WARS, its Princess Leia’s holographic message to Obi Wan Kenobi, who then asks Luke to join the quest.”¹ Campbell writes, “But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth.”²

Innocence is the condition many churches and leaders find themselves in and is most noticeable when they long for the past. This longing is an inward-looking comfort zone. When a church lives here, it is consistent with decline and dying. This can be seen as well when churches are focused on keeping old members instead of growing with new people outside of the faith. For a church to grow, it must become uncomfortable with the status quo. Every Hero’s Journey is unique. The journey of the past is not the journey of the future. The dangers and obstacles on the road ahead must be navigated carefully because the resources of the past are not the ones needed in the future.

In Mancini’s *Church Unique*, he says that churches fall into “the common habit of neglecting what makes a congregation unique and gravitating toward adopting programs and mind-sets that may work elsewhere. Leaders today have not clearly discerned the uniqueness of their church.”³ This loss of a church’s unique DNA is a failure of vision. It is a failure to see that God has created each person, leader and church in a unique fashion.

¹ Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey*.

² Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 42-43.

³ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 9.

Along with this failure of seeing the uniqueness, lies the seven “thinkholes”⁴ that keep a church and its leader in a state of unconscious denial. They are the ministry treadmill, the competency trap, a needs-based slippery slope, the cultural whirlpool: BuzzChurch, the cultural whirlpool: StuckChurch, the conference maze and a denominational rut

Similarly, Brown and Moffett in discussing school communities⁵ say that innocence might be characterized by the following: nostalgia for the past, “If only . . .,” This too shall pass, Outworn paradigms or mindsets, The belief in silver bullets or one-size-fits-all, The “experts” have the answers.

For church leaders, “nostalgia for the past” can take the form of wistful longing when churches were less politicized and all churches needed to do was open the doors and the pews were full. This “rear-view” mentality filters and sees the present through the lens of the past. The “if only” refrain can be among the most destructive and deadly for visionary leadership, as leaders are filled with regret and unfulfilled desires. For church leaders, it can sound like, “If only more people attended church . . . people pledged more . . . more time to prepare sermons.” The “this too shall pass” mentality is often heard when a new program or pastor comes making changes. In effect, parishioners believe that if they just wait long enough, this new program or initiative will go away, just like other innovations that have been tried.

When leaders and churches are stuck in a membership model, they are using “outworn paradigms or mindsets.” Instead, leaders need to inspire and bring the church to see the unique discipleship model of their church. What worked in the past, will not work

⁴ Ibid., 11-19.

⁵ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero's Journey*, 41.

in the future. Most churches are only trying to take care of their members, which is a recipe for a dying church.

The belief in a “silver bullet or one-size-fits-all” and the “experts can save us” is similar to Mancini’s “conference maze.” Again, this is a failure to be creative and “incarnational,” opting instead for copying the product of what other successful megachurch leaders are doing.⁶ As Brown and Moffet point out, “External knowledge remains just that: It can become wisdom and transformative in its impact only when teachers, administrators, and others in a school system construct meaning about that knowledge and make it their own through application and shared inquiry.”⁷ The Church Unique model instead is “a process [that] requires a lot of relationship, creativity, and energy, whereas a product requires only a credit card.”⁸

What all these “thinkholes” have in common is the capacity to keep a leader and church from breakthroughs. To begin the heroic journey, a visionary leader must see that the old ways of thinking, the systems, programs, people that have been kept comfortable for so long must be challenged. Bilbo Baggins staying in the Shire or Luke remaining on Tatooine will not unlock the transformative journey and adventure that awaits the Hobbit and potential Jedi knight. The willingness to take the journey is the first step.

Refusal of the Call

Some leaders, according to Campbell, may hear the call to adventure, but balk at the threshold of adventure. Alternatively, some feel trapped in boredom, hard work or the

⁶ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 15.

⁷ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 55.

⁸ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 15.

constraints of culture.⁹ Going on an adventure means dealing with the greatest of all fears – fear of the unknown.

Mancini says, “Finding clarity requires navigating a tunnel of chaos. This is the point where deeper confusion is experienced first, before clarity can emerge.”¹⁰ In effect, he says visionary leadership will require entering a “dark side” for an undetermined time which can be scary and create resistance. It is what St. John of the Cross called the cloud of unknowing. During this phase, the “call is answered” but is followed by the “entering of the unknown.” This can cause a visionary leader, potential hero and change agent, to refuse the call to adventure, joining the chorus of resisters and to give up reluctantly. Mancini goes on to say, “The heart must be prepared for this journey, because it will bring blood, sweat and tears for those who embark on it.”¹¹ Facing such chaos and darkness is a wake-up call to step into the phase of clarity. Visionary leadership means confronting darker chaotic forces so that collective transformation can happen.

It must be asked, what, then, can the heroic visionary leader do to move beyond this phase to the next of the hero's journey? Leaders and churches have found themselves lost for decades, from the Church Growth movements of the 1970s and 1980s to the “Parenthesis of the Church Effectiveness” movement. There has been no shortage of self-proclaimed “gurus” mentors and wisdom figures who are purveyors of packaged programs, quick fixes or easy solutions, but there is no one “right” answer, no magic bullet to missional church growth and visionary leadership.

⁹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 54.

¹⁰ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 62.

¹¹ Ibid.

As mentioned above, the gap between the innocent Christendom of the old world in America and the chaotic reality of the current pluralistic world that challenges church leaders to ask urgent and critical questions discussed in the first chapter. These questions are the beginning of an adventure that will call people to get clarity about unique priorities, unique mission and unique vision. As Mancini has said over and over again, “Vision transfers through people not paper,” so the visioning process is a people-to-people collaborative process. A choice to respond to the call begins the movement out of chaos into the adventure of the vision quest or process, the third phase of the hero’s journey.

In their book, Brown and Moffett outline seven principles and mental images that guide and inform their vision process and complement Mancini’s visioning process and inform the Hero’s Journey of visionary leadership. The first is, vision functions as a “field” within an organization. Vision needs to operate as an invisible energy field that permeates organizational space, influencing everyone who comes in contact with it. The second is, vision building is an expression of hope. Vision is an act of faith, in the midst of enveloping doubt, one can imagine and create a better future for the next generation. Next, vision is an expression of organizational and personal courage. When people articulate a vision, people know who they are, what they stand for, and why they are here. People become fearlessly open with their values and beliefs.

Fourth, vision building requires personal mastery and emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence that will sustain a hero on the journey involves self-knowledge, discipline, resiliency and exceptional interpersonal skills. Vision building is an open-ended, dynamic process. One’s visions for the future are not set in stone. As one acts and learns from her actions, her visions will evolve, mature and grow. Next, visions

need to be developed collaboratively. Without the involvement of everyone in the school community, visions become mandates without meaning. Stakeholders feel discounted and marginalized. The result is a lack of understanding and commitment from those whose support are needed most. Finally, The enactment of the vision requires personal responsibility. Creating heroic schools requires personal responsibility on the part of every member of the school community—teachers, students, administrators, support staff, parents, the school board, and the community at large.¹²

Mancini’s “mantra” that “Clarity isn’t everything but it changes everything” seems reminiscent here. Although these seven principles were proposed for educational institutions, the parallels to church organizations seem obvious. Partnering the above principles and those proposed by Mancini in chapter 5 of *Church Unique* presents the powerful catalytic role that seeking clarity can bring for the visionary leader’s quest.¹³ He writes, “Clarity makes... 1) Uniqueness Undeniable 2) Direction Unquestionable 3) Enthusiasm Transferable 4) Convictions Tangible 5) Work Meaningful 6) Synergy Possible 7) Success Definable 8) Focus Sustainable 9) Leadership Credible 10) Uncertainty Approachable.”¹⁴ Despite the importance of clarity, there are gaps that can obscure, such as the failure to listen and to communicate consistently and clearly.¹⁵

¹² Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 84.

¹³ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 53-55.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 56-57.

Supernatural Aid

Before the hero departs on the journey, there is usually an encounter with a mentor who shows up typically as a wise little old man, gnome, a disembodied voice or she is visited by a fairy godmother that provides some kind of amulet that helps guide and protect the hero. One of those amulets that will be discussed in more detail below is system thinking: “The hero to whom such a helper appears is typically one who has responded to the call.”¹⁶ The mentor becomes a traveling companion for the visionary leader’s heroic journey. As the above visioning process clearly suggests, the clarity vision-framing quest is a collaborative journey. Brown and Moffett write, “The Wizard of Oz gives Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion a seemingly impossible task, but through their courage and the synergy of their partnership, they discover the resources to not only endure—but to prosper.”¹⁷

Mancini says, the “Beauty of clarity is how it is discovered together.”¹⁸ He goes on to add that it is imperative that this visioning process happen in teams of no larger than twelve or fifteen and that participants be free to wear the roles of “initiator, the challenger (classically called the devil’s advocate), the processor, and the supporter.”¹⁹

Although the hero may journey with others, he needs to remember, “The great myths and legends remind us that external gurus and wisdom figures are only projections and personifications of our own personal and collective selves.” Visionary leadership

¹⁶ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 61.

¹⁷ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 118.

¹⁸ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

means a certain self-awareness, humility and authenticity so that people do not avoid looking at their dark sides or shadow selves. Journeying with others allows for greater clarity and transparency of leaders' strength and weaknesses.

The Crossing of the First Threshold

The hero leader leaves it all behind, moves to the limits of his known world and is met by a guardian. This gatekeeper acts as a guardian to a zone of great mystery and power. This is a place of uncertainty. Nick Oddy says the hero must show resolve, "crossing the threshold often means that we are prepared to let go of a dependence on the knowledge and skills that got us to where we are and seek to open ourselves to further growth and development. Crossing the threshold is to risk failure."²⁰ It is a point of no return. Upon entering this new world, the hero encounters what Campbell refers to as "Threshold Guardians." Hartman and Zimberoff describe them:

They are the gatekeepers to insure that only the worthy embark on the journey. They test the strength and resolve of the hero, and in so doing they test his commitment, fortress his strength, and build his stamina. The Guardians prepare the hero for the journey. These guardians often take the form of dragons; they are dangerous and threatening. And yet they can be an empowering ally, although it is usually difficult to recognize them as allies at the time they are threatening you.²¹

Guardians come in many forms and roles. For the visionary leader, encountering these threshold guardians can be like encountering "whispering legacies." Encounters with "Predecessors, mentors, peers and co-laborers . . . motivate us . . . humble us . . . and sharpen us."²² People can help stop the leader from being the "authoritative expert" and

²⁰ Oddy, "Transformational Leadership Is the Hero's Journey."

²¹ Hartman and Zimberhoff, "The Hero's Journey of Self-Transformation," 5.

²² Mancini, *Church Unique*, 77-78.

always providing solutions. Mancini says, “Visionary leadership is the art of protecting the past as we champion the future.”²³ Like parents, these guardians help churches move forward by helping people remember what has come before; the wisdom of the past before the vision for the future is imagined.

The Belly of the Whale

Campbell uses the Jonah story for the next stage of the journey: “The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died.”²⁴ Tom Stringer describes it as a “metaphorical self-annihilation . . . takes place in which the hero renews himself, leaving his previous life behind as he enters the ‘World Womb.’”²⁵ Hartman and Zimberoff say, “Jonah’s hero journey into the belly of the whale is a descent into the dark place where digestion occurs and new energy is created, into the vast archaic unconscious, from which he ultimately emerges transformed.”²⁶

The so-called “belly of the whale” experience might be thought of as the climax of the journey because it entails an all-in commitment to change by the hero of the story. Jonah says, “He said to them, ‘Take me up, and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you; for I know that because of me this great storm is on you’” (Jon 1:12).

²³ Ibid., 76.

²⁴ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 74.

²⁵ Tom Stringer, “Storytelling in Mediation: The Hero’s Journey by Tom Stringer,” Mediate.com, March 2004, <http://www.mediate.com/articles/stringerT.cfm>, 4.

²⁶ Hartman and Zimberoff, “The Hero’s Journey of Self-Transformation,” 14.

²⁶ Parker Palmer, “Leadership and the Inner Journey,” *Leader to Leader* (Fall 2001): 29.

Other metaphorical images might be a dragon's lair, a lion's den, and an innermost cave; basically - a zone of danger. It is a no going back, all-in experience.

For the visionary leader, it might be experienced as accepting a call to a church or mission. It may be beginning the vision framing process of descent into the chaos before the clarity emerges. Parker Palmer says, "The only way out of inner darkness is to go down into it and find out what's there. You have to come to terms with what's in the darkness before you can come through to the other side."²⁷

There are no blueprints for visionary leadership. However, stepping into the belly of darkness is a needed step to walk into the light. In a famous metaphor, Edwin Friedman said that leading change in an emotional system like a family, or church, was like Chuck Yeager breaking the sound barrier. As Yeager's "plane approached the sound barrier, it shook violently and most pilots (presumably out of fear) backed off. Yeager had the intuition that it would be smooth on the other side, poured it on, and indeed broke through to smooth supersonic flight."²⁸

Stage II: Initiation/Journey

The Road of Trials

The hero has left the familiar old world and has entered a magical realm and encounters a series of adventures, trials, tests and ordeals. If a visionary leader is armed with the amulet of "systems thinking," and understanding that with this knowledge of the change process she will have the skills to facilitate change. Armed with Mancini's Vision

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007), 48.

Framing process, a visionary leader will further have the knowledge and skills to create a successful change. Nevertheless, the process is full of trials, tests and initiations. The chaos that ensues for the heroic leader calls for assistance by helpers or through advice or amulets he received before crossing the threshold into the Vision Framing process. Getting clarity for the next stage in the journey begins with gaining clarity for the road ahead. Moreover, this stage in the journey is accomplished in much the same way that Mancini discusses in chapter 6, “Clarity Pre-Evangelism” with four imperatives that guide the complex and the conflict that can emerge in organizational change.

Frame it First. He writes, “State your vision framework before you frame your vision statement. Repent of stabbing at the future.”²⁹ Visionary leaders need to humbly refrain from seeing the “momentary glimpses” as a complete visionary framework. Rather they should engage the whole “five-part framework” of the Vision Frame.

Listen Until you Glisten. He continues, “Discern the future by seeing what you already have. Repent of neglecting the obvious.”³⁰ On one hand, the process is filled with unrealized possibilities, but on the other, it is filled with letting go of “sacred cows,” programs and people that no longer meet the mission and vision of the church.

Team the horses. Mancini writes, “Go farther by pulling together. Repent from trying to do it yourself.”³¹ Visionary leaders should not become isolated. Rather they should join with others in creating a collaborative team to work together to combat the fear and even discouragement that the Vision Framing process can create: “One of the

²⁹ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 63.

³⁰ Ibid., 64.

³¹ Ibid.

major trials and tests is the isolation of the person with the vision. . . . I think one of the most powerful things we can do is connect visionary people with each other. Without kindred spirits, without professional connection, we can wind up in burnout.”³²

Work outside in. Mancini writes, “Discover an angel by inviting a stranger. Repent the myth of objectivity.”³³ In the Hero’s Journey, there are two common battles, “the Brother Battle,” where the hero is at war with a familiar foe or with whom he has some affinity, and the “Dragon Battle,” where the battle is with an alien or monster. The hero may seek out some outside assistance or other amulets, weapons and allies as a reward for each of the trails, ordeals and battles won. For the visionary leader, these may look like opportunities to undergo additional training, coaching and the use of a consultant. Having a “‘strategic outsider’ is a critical element,” Mancini argues because it brings “new information or perspective into our lives.”³⁴ Campbell says the hero often journey’s with a “protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass.”³⁵ These figures can act as coaches, gurus, wisdom figures and “whispering legacies” bringing an outside perspective to see the forest from the trees.

A visionary leader who begins using the Vision Framework process is entering into a lengthy battle with the forces of darkness to bring light, clarity and ultimately a vision of the Church’s Kingdom Concept, Mission, Values, Measure and Strategy. The

³² Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 131.

³³ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 66.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 57.

visionary leader will inevitably encounter some resistance and even sabotage when asking these five clarity questions: What are we doing? Why are we doing it? How are we doing it? When are we successful? Where is God taking us?

The ultimate purpose of the hero's journey is to return to one's point of origin, transformed and contributing in a new way. Brown and Moffett write, "The hero's experiences have been transforming and have equipped her with newfound powers of insight, wisdom, efficacy, and commitment."³⁶

It is at this point in Campbell's Hero's Journey that, for the sake of expediency, I will merge the next five stages: The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and Ultimate Boon, as Vogler's adaptation differs using Tests, Allies and Enemies, Approach to the Innermost Cave, The Ordeal and Reward. What both models have in common is that this is a period of deep conflict, inner searching and intuitive self-confrontation.

If the visionary hero and leader are going to succeed in leading a Vision Framing process or any transformative organizational change, then the leader must also undergo a transformative change. Overcoming fears of change both for the leader and for the congregation can be like slaying the dragons that have defined the status quo.

What the first three stages have to offer the hero are an encounter with self-mastery. The hero is battling his inner dragons and demons in the innermost caves of the mind and heart to unlock the hero's latent potential. It is a journey to a more authentic self. Hartmann says that it is an integration of the "newly evolving self . . . this requires an attitude of gratitude for all that has transpired in one's life, for it has all contributed to the

³⁶ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero's Journey*, 146.

open horizon of potential before us today on this current journey.”³⁷ These encounters inspire the hero to grow, change, to find courage and face the unknown areas of one’s life. At their deepest core, leaders need to know who they are. Leaders continually seek clarity, courage and decisiveness, while not pushing their own goals on others or on their congregations. This is leadership through self-definition.

Edwin Friedman is famous for applying Family Systems Theory to congregational life and leadership. The phrase “Family System” had its origin in the field of psychiatry and was first used in the work of Murray Bowen in the 1950s and 1960s. His approach and therapy with families developed into a way of understanding emotional processes that came to be known as “Bowen Family Theory.” Friedman studied with Bowen and applied his ideas of Bowen Theory to religious organizations and ministry in his book *Generation to Generation*.³⁸

For Friedman, an effective leader is a “self-differentiated” leader who relies on three practices: “(1) staying in touch with others, including those who are resistant; (2) taking a defined, well-considered, but nonreactive stance; and (3) remaining connected and nonreactive (that is, deeply engaged and yet detached) in the face of sabotage.”³⁹ To be an effective leader one must begin not by managing others but by managing one’s self. It is critical for visionary leaders to learn to face their fears, challenge their assumptions and thus be able to change their self-perception and those of others.

³⁷ Hartmann and Zimberoff, “The Hero’s Journey of Self-Transformation,” 18.

³⁸ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

³⁹ Ibid., 229-230.

In his final work, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick-Fix*,⁴⁰ he notes that society, enamored as it is of expertise, often understands a leader as the expert, the one who has mastery over all relevant knowledge or technique. Yet in social systems such as families, churches and synagogues, such expertise is not only elusive but may even prove counterproductive. Friedman writes, “If we must conceive of leadership in terms of expertise, none of us will ever feel adequately prepared.”⁴¹ Leadership, he believes, has more to do with a leader’s emotional and spiritual maturity than the education and data available to the leader. A great deal of leadership theory focuses on how to change followers. What Friedman focused on was how leaders could change themselves. This is the major insight Friedman brings to leadership theory and that is applicable to visionary leadership and conflict resolution.

A visionary leader needs to be armed also with a very good understanding of the nature of the conflicts a vision framing process may bring. For the Hero’s Journey, this is the stage of the Inmost Cave and the Supreme Ordeal (Vogler) and requires the organizational leader to understand the forces at work to undermine his success.

Stage III: Return

The third and final phase of the Hero’s Journey is called the Return. There are, in fact, six steps in this stage of Campbell’s work: Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live. The transformed hero returns to share the treasure with the world, but is

⁴⁰ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007).

⁴¹ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 5.

the community ready for the hero's insightful return? For example, a congregational leader, now equipped with new insights into the real causes of conflict, or a deeper self-understanding of how she might have been the cause of the conflict, can take the steps to apply the "elixir" to a wound or conflicted congregation. Oddy says, "If a leader is courageous enough to persist with their efforts to change themselves and become the leader their organization needs them to be then treasures will be discovered."⁴²

However, this final phase can be the hardest, for in the return home; the leader "can become sidetracked by indecisiveness, by confused values, by seduction into intoxication, or by an inflated ego."⁴³ Continued self-mastery by the leader, with the help of an executive coach, mental health professional, spiritual director or mentor clergy may be the elixir that is needed and applied.

If the transformed hero visionary leader has used the Vision Framing process, then a congregation would have struggled together on a journey with a team over the four clarity questions to arrive at to a breakthrough, the "Vision Proper." The gift, elixir or boon would likely be the Map and the Mandate that Mancini describes in *Church Unique*.⁴⁴

Rebecca Chan Allen would describe this stage in an organization's life as a point of synchronicity or epiphany: "Epiphany is an intense experience of revelation, a sudden, exquisite insight. Divisive boundaries melt away. Conventional meanings dissolve. There is a feeling of being one with all that is. People and organizations that are touched by

⁴² Oddy, "Transformational Leadership is the Hero's Journey."

⁴³ Hartman and Zimberoff, "The Hero's Journey of Self-Transformation," 30.

⁴⁴ Mancini, *Church Unique*, see 137 for Map and 120 for Mandate.

epiphanies are irrevocably transformed.”⁴⁵ The Vision Proper is an epiphany moment for a church that brings everything together. The conflict is over, no more dragons to slay, no more tests, trials nor ordeals. The visionary leader has allowed the collective vision to emerge into the light for all to see. There is no need to sell a vision; the Vision Proper has emerged out of a process, a self-differentiated leader’s skills and knowledge of the congregational system towards a unified purpose. Epiphany experiences for a church allow a vision to emerge, for goals and values that were once thought inconceivable to be realizable.

Jim Collins, in *Good to Great* calls this kind of visionary leadership as Level 5 Leadership.⁴⁶ First, a Level 5 Leader is not a narcissist. She does not create a church that will fall apart if the pastor leaves. A Level 5 Leader lives out of the vision frame the team and church created. Collins also believes visionary leaders are about truth. He writes, “Yes leadership is about vision, but leadership is equally about creating a climate where the truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted,”⁴⁷ truthfully telling what emerges from the Vision Framing process.

Synergy

This Vision Proper discovered must now be integrated throughout the whole congregation. Creating synergy is the next step for the visionary leader. Allen says, “Synergy means combining parts to produce something greater than the sum of those

⁴⁵ Allen, *Guiding Change Journeys*, 149.

⁴⁶ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap—and Others Don’t* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

parts – a greater whole.”⁴⁸ A Vision Proper now serves the agent of integration and synergy. Mancini points out those churches often operate in “organizational silos” with each ministry area living out its strategic goals, thereby missing potential synergy.⁴⁹ The visionary leader must act as a coach bringing all the players to integrate around one common vision to bring synergy versus accountability.

In the Hero’s Journey, the hero returns to the old community or home with the task of bringing the newfound gifts, elixir or boon to the community thereby enhancing the community. Allen describes this similarly to Mancini as a synergistic process, of bringing parts into the whole in the following organizational stages as: incorporating the gifts of discovery, reconciling differences, sustaining the system and creating a new vision.⁵⁰ Integration of and merging teams around shared goals and futures.⁵¹

Application

Now that there is clarity, it is time for the leader, armed with the Vision Proper to live it out and fully apply it into the life of the church, and into people’s hearts through every means available. Campbell explains:

The whole idea is that you’ve got to bring out again that which you went to recover, the unrealized, unutilized potential in yourself. The whole point of this journey is the reintroduction of this potential into the world; that is to say, to you living in the world. You are to bring this treasure of understanding back and integrate it in a rational life. It goes without saying that this is difficult. Bringing

⁴⁸ Allen, *Guiding Change Journeys*, 167.

⁴⁹ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 23.

⁵⁰ Allen, *Guiding Change Journeys*, 168.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the boon back can be even more difficult than going down into your own depths in the first place.⁵²

The leader and the Vision Framing team have found a treasure that God has placed in their midst for the fulfillment of a unique purpose. Disseminating this vision is itself challenging. Here Campbell would agree with Mancini when he says:

Once you have clarified and articulated your vision, the messy and complicated work of advancing it begins. The hardest part of the journey is that those who sign off on the vision initially will get distracted, perhaps lose focus, or even want to redesign the blueprints. Your role is to keep the vision alive – to deliver vision daily in order to build momentum for your movement. As you do, you will be constantly aligning, attuning, and integrating the vision into the minds and hearts, actions and passions and roles descriptions and organizations charts for your Church Unique.⁵³

For the visionary leader, bringing the vision into what Mancini calls “Alignment” is critical for “missional effectiveness and efficiency.”⁵⁴ This challenge of alignment varies depending on whether one’s church is an “established church” or an “entrepreneurial church.”⁵⁵ The Stages of Alignment for mission effectiveness in an established church are Confusion, Communication, Coordination and Collaboration. In entrepreneurial churches they are Dissipation, Oscillation, Expansion and Acceleration. Mancini maps out what those challenges look like and the necessary “Persistent Modification” work required by the leader and the team. Using the Map and the Mandate, the visionary leader would use the tools Mancini calls the “four stages of alignment and the five C’s of persistent modification.” The five C’s being: Catapult the Ministry,

⁵² Campbell, *Pathway to Bliss*, 119.

⁵³ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 196.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 198.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 202.

Combine the Ministry, Contributize the Ministry, Cage the Ministry and Cut the Ministry.⁵⁶

The next steps a visionary leader would practice are what Mancini calls an Attunement Sandwich. This is a process whereby “Structural Alignment, Communication Alignment and Heart Attunement” are harnessed towards advancing the Vision Proper. Heart Attunement is about winning the hearts, souls and minds of the people so that there is a harmonious sound coming from the congregation. To that end, the recognition of the unique approaches and missional love the visionary leader must use with the “passengers, crew, stowaways and pirates” is critical at this point.

Aligning communications learned from Patrick Lencioni is vital to organizational health.⁵⁷ Lencioni says the “only way for people to embrace a message is to hear it over a period of time, in a variety of different situations, and preferably from different people.”⁵⁸ Mancini would agree and add that dialogue and listening are essential to the attunement process.⁵⁹

This last stage of the Hero’s Journey when compared to Allen’s model really is all about integration and application. Once again, Mancini’s *Integration Model* is perfectly aligned on the journey. It is “not a system theory, but a conversation starting point . . . by looking at the church through five perspectives: leadership, communication, process, environment, and culture. For each perspective, [Mancini] presents three principles for

⁵⁶ Ibid., 203-206.

⁵⁷ Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 141-151.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁹ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 210.

weaving vision into the life of the church.”⁶⁰ Rather than outline all five perspectives and their respective principles here, it would be sufficient to say that these perspectives and principles would give the visionary leader powerful tools to bring it all home. The “Integration Model gives you a working vocabulary for pulling your unique vision together.”⁶¹

Conclusion

All organizations are being challenged to change at a record pace for so many reasons. From globalization pressures, to the e-business revolution, to corporate downsizing; people are being rocked by anxiety on numerous fronts—including the rising levels of public anxiety that impact individuals, families and organizations.

Today’s modern American religious congregations are often in crisis in a complex emotional laden social system that often resembles an anxious family. If a religious congregational leader wants to be a visionary leader to integrate fully transformative, systemic vision and change, then the leader will also need to work on defining his own values, beliefs and vision.

To be heroic visionary leader in the Church is to accept responsibility to a sustained commitment to the vision framing process for tackling and solving the complex problems facing churches today. Heroic church leaders are like the heroes of Campbell's universal myth. They are men and women who are overcoming their personal, psychological, cultural and structural limitations on behalf of God’s glory.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 216.

⁶¹ Ibid., 233.

One of the biggest challenges to a church's successful change efforts and vision framing process is getting people on board to adapt to the new challenges and settings churches are finding themselves in. People resist change. A church that operates out of a status quo, stagnant, "hunker in the bunker" mentality is a church on a deathwatch. A visionary leader and a church that accepts the call to look at oneself and go on a Vision Pathway journey, is a church that is willing to look into living its unique mission. Strategic planning, guidance and maps found in the authors cited in this dissertation along with their tools is vital. Leaders need to accept aid from others who can help them deal with the battles and challenges of transforming leaders and churches.

For a leader it means looking at one's self and achieving insightful self-mastery that leads to personal transformation. At least five ancient Greek sages have been attributed the dictum to "know thyself" and according to Friedman, this is the key to leadership. A self-aware leader is a more powerful and effective leader. For the congregation, the employment of eight change management steps that Kotter proposed is also critical. The insights of Friedman teach that when leaders self-differentiate, others in the group will

Typically resist the initiative of leadership, often responding with some version of: "you're wrong; change back or else." At the heart of this resistance, the challenge for a leader is to maintain a non-anxious presence, which includes staying connected by listening to concerns and working collaboratively to address legitimate interests in a win-win manner. A family systems view of change says leaders must calmly, but persistently, stay on course in pursuing positive changes necessary for maintaining congregational health, while staying connected to others in the system who will adapt to the changes being instituted."⁶²

⁶² Kotter, "Leading Change," 67-68.

This is all hard work, but so is any transformation. This self-differentiated leadership work is not easy but the benefits are real. Self-reflection, shared congregational dialogue and vision setting through teaching, enabling, inspiring and challenging leaders can generate communities that foster profound transformation in people's lives.

If a congregational leader goes on the Hero's Journey of personal transformation, he then can return to the organization with the insight, the courage and tools to lead the organization through change. Most change theory focuses on the structural elements at an organizational level and for the leader to become more competent in leading the change. Visionary leadership in the midst of conflict is less about strategies or techniques to employ in resolving conflicts and more about being true to oneself so that conflict can be transformed with healing and forgiveness. The model presented by Campbell and Mancini addresses both personal and organizational transformation. An organic process engages the archetypal trials all experience when dealing with change.

If one sees the Hero's Journey simply as a metaphor for learning of new methods and techniques to handle change or conflict, she will have missed the real power of the work. Nor is this about being more courageous in the face of change and conflict that can emerge out of Vision Framing process. For Campbell, the Hero's Journey is about a life lived in self-discovery, "Luke Skywalker was never more rational than when he found within himself the resources of character to meet his destiny."⁶³ He added that at the end of the journey, the hero returns, not for the personal "aggrandizement of the hero . . . the ultimate aim of the quest must be neither release nor ecstasy for oneself, but the wisdom

⁶³ Campbell and Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, xiv.

and the power to serve others.”⁶⁴ A celebrity, he said, lives for the self, a “hero acts to redeem society.”⁶⁵ He continues:

The ultimate purpose and outcome of the hero’s journey is the return of the protagonist to her point of origin, knowing and contributing to the place in a new, more fully conscious way. The hero’s experiences have been transforming and have equipped her with newfound powers of insight, wisdom, efficacy, and commitment. In turn, the individuals, empires, and kingdoms touched by the heroic figure as she continues on the path toward transformation are, in turn, transformed themselves.⁶⁶

Campbell believed that in The Return, there is both a benefit for the hero and for the community (organization, church). Personal transformation helps congregational transformation. For the visionary church leader who is courageous enough to accept the call, go on the Hero’s Journey, battle the ego, practice change principles and become the leader church needs to be, then treasure will be discovered. This is the sacred responsibility of leadership - to help others find the unique mission of their churches.

Reggie McNeal says, “God shapes our lives; he does not script them . . . spiritual leaders are coconspirators with God in how their lives turn out.”⁶⁷ Just as Joseph from the Old Testament had a sense of God’s presence as he journeyed through the tragedies and victories of life and had clarity that God has been guiding him for a special unique mission in life, so too is that sense of mission and calling that will sustain ministry leaders through the challenges of congregational life. Similarly, the Church also living as it is in a time of significant stress and change must reflect with its leaders what is its

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Brown and Moffett, *The Hero’s Journey*, 146.

⁶⁷ Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), XV.

mission and remain open to the Spirit. Having a map to guide through this journey and a vision of the pathway process is a Divine gift. For the church that accepts the call to engage in the Hero's Journey using the Vision Pathway process in *Church Unique*, will help them discover and live into the unique vision and mission of the Church.

CHAPTER 7

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AS A HERO'S JOURNEY LEADER ON THE JOURNEY OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Leadership is challenging, anywhere and under any circumstances. Clergy are called to exercise a variety of different tasks and balance roles in their organizations, from interpreters of the Word, counselors, worship leaders, to human resource managers and administrators. They are leaders of complex social systems with roles that clash and at times, interfere with one another. A pastor who might be at the bedside of a dying member in the afternoon might be in a parish council meeting in the evening. The faith leader must be supportive and understanding, but also run a church, recruit workers for the stewardship campaign, support and build a coalition to revise worship services, and volunteers to prod and encourage when their commitments begin to fade.

When people who are different, with different perceived needs, desires and wants come together, conflict ultimately arises. Conflict in faith communities arises for many reasons. There is conflict over liturgy, social action, theology and lifestyle issues. Ultimately, conflict arises because people are different, with different perceived needs, desires and wants. Conflict connotes a condition of opposition and to a degree, it is a

basic resistance to change. Underneath that, resistance is a generalized anxiety or a specific fear. Conflict is frequently tinged with negative emotions and attitudes or sheer antagonism. Conflict in faith communities arises for many reasons. Faith communities (churches and synagogues) present exceptional conflict resolution problems, often because people hold deep identity values, along with the group dynamics and family systems that are present.

When conflict emerges in faith communities, those who carry the unique responsibility to lead need roadmaps to navigate that journey. Clergy in particular negotiate the conflict between the needs of the church, its individual members and that of the congregational leader. When conflicts arise, not if, but when, clergy can feel lost and overwhelmed by the complicated and time-consuming reality of church conflicts, but they do not have to feel lost.

Often, there are books that focus on exploring the qualities that a leader of a faith community should possess if she is to lead a congregation successfully through a period of conflict. Some look to find the right approaches that might focus the congregation on the application of techniques, processes and assessment tools for resolving conflict.¹

According to David Augsburger in his book, *Helping People Forgive*, “Conflict resolution has a reconciliation component, conflict transformation has both forgiveness and reconciliation components, and conflict management has neither.”² John Paul Lederach has also been one of the leaders of the phrase “conflict transformation.” Around

¹ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996), 29.

² Julie Anne Grace, “Conflict Transformation in the Church,” (DMin diss., Atlanta Theological Association, Interdenominational Theological Center, 2012), 6-7.

the end of the 1990s, a shift away from conflict resolution toward conflict transformation occurred.³

Conflict transformation “provides a more holistic understanding, which can be fleshed out at several levels. Unlike resolution and management, the idea of transformation does not suggest we simply eliminate or control conflict, but rather points descriptively toward its inherent dialectic nature.”⁴ Lederach and Maiese believe that leadership in the midst of conflict is about changing views of how one relates to others in the conflict: “Conflict is normal in human relationships and conflict is a motor of change. And transformation is clear in vision because it brings into focus the horizon toward which we journey, namely the building of healthy relationships and communities, both locally and globally.”⁵ For the leader to change his view about the conflict would presuppose that the leader undergo some transformation as well, a shift in how he sees and relates to the world.

Some faith leaders choose to ignore or avoid conflict. Some hear the call to lead change, knowing that this may lead to conflict, but they venture forth, responding with courage and skill into the conflict, transforming the conflict and themselves in the process. Resolving conflicts draws people into unknown territory that can resemble a journey.

³ John Paul Lederach, “Conflict Transformation,” *Beyond Intractability*, eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder (October 2003), <<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation>>.

⁴ John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 17.

⁵ Lederach, “Conflict Transformation.”

One of the purposes of this dissertation is to examine the archetypal journey proposed by Campbell's work as a potential metaphorical map for conflict transformation. The Hero's Journey template can teach how to travel through the challenges of not only personal transformation but also organizational conflict transformation so that a leader and congregation can achieve their own highest potential. My hope is to view the Hero's Journey as a lens, whereby the hero as leader is able to recognize and apply those timeless mythic insights to the task of transforming a conflict into a "heroic" victory of healing and forgiveness. A hero is someone who therefore inevitably engages conflict. Following a heroic leader is common across cultures and often seen as someone who can transcend the political and social obstacles to lead people towards a common goal.⁶

When a conflict arises in one's personal life or in an organization, there is always a story. There is "my" side of the story and "their" side of the story. If a story is prefaced with the opening line of, "Once upon a time . . ." the reader would know the story will try to convey a deeper truth than just the facts; it will be an attempt for one to say, "Hey look what happened, there was this unexpected event, I went through this trial and darkness and I emerged changed, transformed and in the end, better." In summary, everyone has those stories. This is why the Hero's Journey is so appealing and relatable to people, because it is our story too. It is in our brains; it is in our DNA; it is an archetypal story. Campbell and Jung, who wrote about archetypes, believe these characters are eternally repeating in our minds, our dreams and in the myths of cultures around the world.

⁶ Joyce L. Hocker and William W. Wilmot, *Interpersonal Conflict* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 53.

Gary Harper is a conflict resolution trainer, writer, speaker and author of *The Joy of Conflict Resolution*. He says that in conflicts people often create a “Drama Triangle” where there is a victim, a hero and a villain.⁷

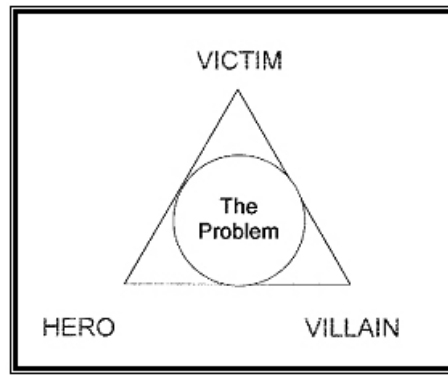


Illustration 4. The Drama Triangle

Harper says, “Often we see ourselves as the victim—innocent and powerless. Sometimes we play the hero and risk the danger of conflict to right a wrong and see justice done. Occasionally, we may slip into the role of the villain, attacking the other person with anger or sarcasm. Each role limits our understanding of conflict. Together they form a ‘drama triangle’ that traps us in confrontation.”⁸

If one wants to transform this drama and get unstuck from scenarios where there are only winners and losers in a battle, Harper says he needs to shift how he sees the story. The diagram below creates a circle of resolution, where the problem is at the center. Harper writes, “To resolve conflict, we need to relinquish our roles as victim, villain or hero and work with the other person to solve the problem. If we need a villain,

⁷ Gary Harper, “Once Upon a Conflict: The Journey from Confrontation to Collaboration,” Mediate.com, June 5, 2005, <http://www.mediate.com/articles/harperG1.cfm>.

⁸ Ibid.

let it be the problem, not the person.”⁹ Harper’s insights reveal the dynamics of conflict that operate on a personal and organizational level similar to that of narrative. Tom Stringer, a conflict mediator, writes, “Conflict stories comprise the heart and soul of mediation. . . . Understanding the ways in which conflict stories function is crucial for mediators who, wishing to go beyond the mere settlement of superficial conflicts, search for opportunities for real change in the lives of the parties.”¹⁰

Stringer credits the work of Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith in, *Resolving Personal and Organizational Conflict*, and uses Campbell’s Hero’s Journey as the template for understanding storytelling as a useful tool and perspective “on the ways in which disputing parties demonize their adversaries in stories, defend their own egos, and ultimately reveal their authentic selves when they take responsibility for their conflicts.”¹¹

For Cloke and Goldsmith, the mediator functions as the Hero on the mythic adventure or Journey: “The essence of a story . . . is not only to bring people together to jointly experience events, but also to process reality and to discover and create who we are . . . stories wield tremendous power . . . they can keep us angry, fearful and locked in combat, or on the contrary, with some guidance, lead us to forgiveness and transformation.”¹² It is Stringer’s 10-stage model of the Hero’s Journey that I will use and adapt for this paper, although with additional study and guidance, I may use other versions of the Campbell model in the future.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tom Stringer, “Storytelling in Mediation: The Hero’s Journey by Tom Stringer,” Mediate.com, March 2004, <http://www.mediate.com/articles/stringerT.cfm>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Lederach says, “It is common in the study of conflict to develop a map that helps us to engage in conflict assessment and analysis. Similarly, it is useful to have a map of what we mean by transformation.”¹³ Lederach’s conflict transformation map can help people to visualize the development of a strategy to transform constructively conflict.

The transformational framework has three components that point to a place of inquiry in the development of a response to conflict: The presenting situation, the horizon of preferred future and the development of change processes linking the two.

The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation

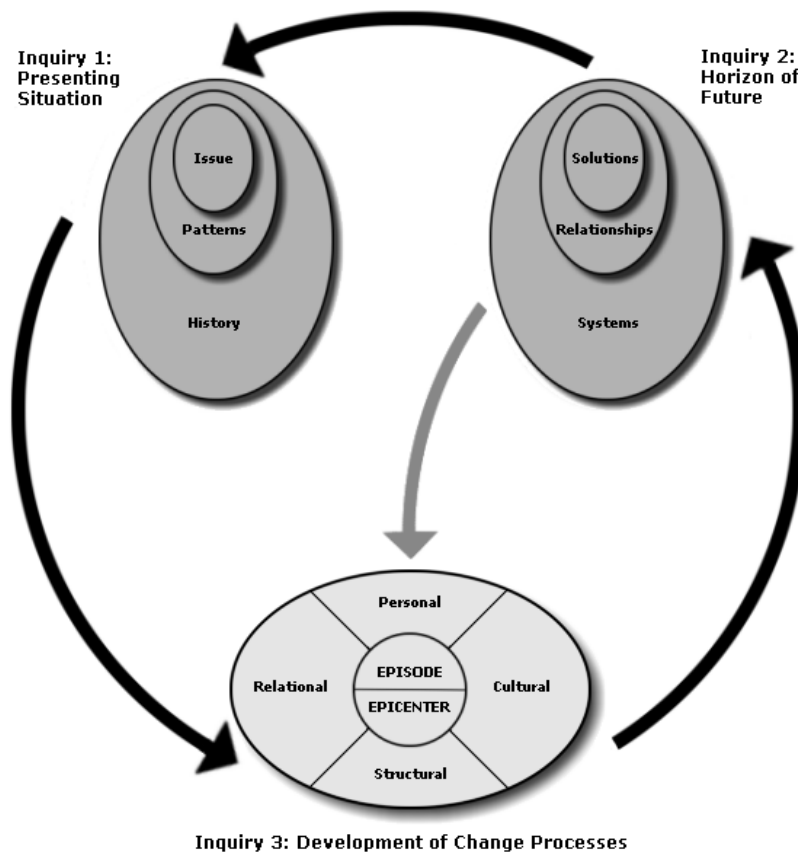


Illustration 5. Development of Change Processes

¹³ Lederach, “Conflict Transformation.”

Ledarach writes, “The movement from the present toward the desired future is not a straight line, but rather a set of dynamic initiatives that set in motion change processes and create a sustained platform to pursue long-term change.”¹⁴ The similarities in Lederach’s model and that of Campbell’s Hero’s Journey are interesting.

The maps presented above present a lens or metaphor to envision the possibilities of responses and roles within a conflict so that one can see the deeper issues and patterns present in a given organizational situation. The Hero’s Journey can give creative responses to conflict. To understand more fully this conflict transformation metaphor, this project will now look at each stage of the Hero’s Journey and see what insights they may reveal about conflict and a congregational leader’s own transformation.

Stage I: Separation and Preparation in Conflict Transformation

Often the issue or apparent source of conflict is not what is initially presented. Parishioners may complain about a whole host of related issues from pastoral availability, preaching, personal style, to congregational administration or theological teachings, when in reality, the real causes of conflict are elsewhere.

Conflict Resolution and Systems Theory

Congregations’ function like a family system, Friedman believes. Therefore, “to ‘think systems’ is to focus upon the whole rather than the parts, realizing that the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts.”¹⁵ Further, he says

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Friedman, “Generation to Generation,” 19.

congregations are places where emotions are processes and

To “think emotional process” is to be aware of the interpersonal processes that are present in every human system. The focus should no longer be upon symptomatic content. Symptoms are eliminated by modifying the process rather than by attempting to change the “dysfunctional identified patient” directly—an effort that results in simply recycling the symptom to a different place in the system.¹⁶

A key component of Friedman’s insights involves the concept of the “emotional triangle,” which is very applicable to conflict resolution. He writes, “The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will ‘triangle in’ or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with another.”¹⁷ Therefore, in a calm period (low or no anxiety), people are comfortable in being intimate, close or together, but in times of high anxiety the outside position is preferred (emotional triangulation). During these periods of anxiety, people ease tension by triangulating another person either into a dyad conversation or into behavior. A mature person can talk about the issues or challenges they are having and yet, own responsibility for solving problems with others. This is in distinction to blaming others and never confronting them. The person who is in the outer position may develop into a scapegoat, taking on the anxiety or fears of the other two. On the other hand, the person in the outside position may be able to listen without feeling vulnerable due to their lack of intimacy to the situation.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

The Role of Self-differentiated Leadership in Vision Framing and Conflict

The key work of a leader, according to Friedman is to “to define one’s own goals or values while trying to maintain a non-anxious presence within the system.”¹⁸ Leaders need to know who they most deeply are and what their foundational convictions are. They need to work continually on clarity, decisiveness and courage without becoming so anxious that they seek to push their goals on others or on their congregations. Bowen noted that “A ‘differentiated self’ is one who can maintain emotional objectivity while in the midst of an emotional system in turmoil, yet at the same time relate to key people in the system.”¹⁹

Leadership through self-differentiation means one must “define self” while staying “connected and non-reactive.” The idea is to say, “This is what I believe, this is what I am willing to do or not do” while staying connected and regulating your own emotional reactivity to the others in your emotional system.”²⁰ These emotional systems can become heightened, for example, the leader engaging the Vision Framing process and any significant change. For the visionary leader, the value of Friedman’s work may be to buttress vision and belief in one’s own instincts and to show how to become negotiators with others in the vision framing team.

Leadership in the midst of conflict is about changing how one views others in the conflict. The natural human response to conflict is anxiety and fear. In the face of these emotions is where the strength of the leader’s self-differentiation will either succeed or

¹⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 69.

²⁰ Ibid.

fail. The leader can benefit from Friedman's invocation to "give anxiety back to its' rightful owner!"²¹ Self-differentiated leadership is creating and balancing. One must create and define the self—based on one's own values and beliefs—and follow one's own sense of duty and mission while balancing and working collaboratively with others to define the group's corporate sense of mission and purpose. This creates a balance of unity between the two forces of human life, that of individuality and community. It demands the ability to maintain emotional connectedness with others in the system. Thus, "leadership" for Friedman is a reasoned value-filled response in an emotional system.

Well-defined leadership will always be met with opposition and disruption; it is necessary if any organizational system is to undergo change.²² A congregational leader needs to anticipate that he will meet opposition to change and that the "system will react with seduction and sabotage to get the well-defined leader to 'give up self' in exchange for togetherness."²³ Friedman says that, "When you are dealing with change in a church system you must always stay in touch with everyone in the system—even the naysayer—and always listen to what they have to say . . . give them your reasoned position and then expect sabotage. But what you must never do is lose touch with any part of the system, because if you do, you can't lead it."²⁴ Leaders who protect themselves to take care of their own pain, in effect are no longer leading.

²¹ Ibid., 39.

²² Ibid., 224.

²³ Ibid., 227.

²⁴ Ibid.

Gilbert Rendle, former Director at the Center for Learning at the Alban Institute (a United Methodist minister and organizational development consultant using systems theory), says that, “When you meet resistance in response to innovation, realize that resistance was already there before you introduced the new idea. More than a reaction to the innovation, the resistance was already a part of the system for some very normal, natural, and important reasons”²⁵

In the Yeager metaphor cited above, is an analogy that can be overused if a leader is convinced that gritting one’s teeth and pouring on the gas in the face of the opposition will bring smooth skies sooner than later. This phenomenon happens, despite numerous warnings in Friedman’s work that being bull headed and cut off from others in the system is not the same thing as being well defined and connected. Friedman often stated that the most difficult aspect of staying connected is managing the interior anxiety to those whom one is in conflict with. To do this may require working on a definition and connection within one’s family of origin. It is more than reading a book or attending a workshop and then “pushing through.”

Leadership influence and power is best when one is connected and leads with self and takes clearly defined positions. Followers are more likely to follow leaders who are well differentiated. But when one tries to push something through with simply the power of one’s persuasion or by sheer force of personality or authority, (sometimes there’s

²⁵ Gil Rendle, “Leading Change in the Congregation Meeting the Leadership Challenge: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders and Leading the Multi-Generational Church,” (lecture, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts, Grand Rapids, Michigan, January, 11, 2002), http://www.flumc.com/OCT/leading_a_congregation_through_change.htm.

nothing wrong with that approach) she will encounter strong countervailing forces waiting to react to such leadership.

For the visionary leader on the hero's journey, the achievement of "self-differentiation" is itself overcoming one of the biggest ordeals – that of self-mastery. Campbell referred to this condition as *apotheosis*, when one realizes that he is what he is seeking.²⁶

If the leader has successfully navigated through the conflicts that leading change and the vision framing process may bring, one can assume from an organizational framework that there is a common set of shared values, language, clarity and focus. It is at this stage in the journey that a leader should listen to the voices of the past, what Mancini calls "the whispering legacy voices" so that one can connect the past, the present and the future.²⁷ The visionary leader, armed with the above knowledge drawn from Mancini and Friedman will be armed to deal with the trials, tests, ordeals, chaos and complexity of congregational change and vision framing, especially the inevitable conflicts, a theme which pervades the mythic literature of the Hero's Journey.

Friedman researched real reasons for conflict. Among the real or essential causes of congregational conflict are: lay over commitment, change in homeostasis, life-cycle events, pastoral over-functioning, burnout and triangulation.²⁸ He says that, "It is almost never the issue per se that is destructive but, rather, the overall homeostatic conditions

²⁶ Campbell, *Pathways to Bliss*, 118.

²⁷ Mancini, *Church Unique*, 76.

²⁸ Thomas F. Fischer, "The Issue is not the Issue: The Real Causes of Congregational Conflict," *Enrichment Journal* (September, 2005), http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200502/200502_030_sb_issue.cfm.

that give to any issue its destructive potential.”²⁹ When the environment of a parish changes, it is then when the potential for conflict arises.

Eric Brahm outlines the stages of conflict. He says that the “potential for conflict exists whenever people have different needs, values, or interests; this is the ‘latent’ conflict stage. The conflict may not become apparent until a ‘triggering event’ leads to the emergence (or beginning) of the obvious conflict.”³⁰ In this “latent” stage there may exist differences between individuals in a congregation, but they do not bother each other enough to cause one side to create conflict. Brahm’s chart for conflict stages is helpful in understanding the flow or terrain of conflict and the Hero’s Journey of conflict transformation.

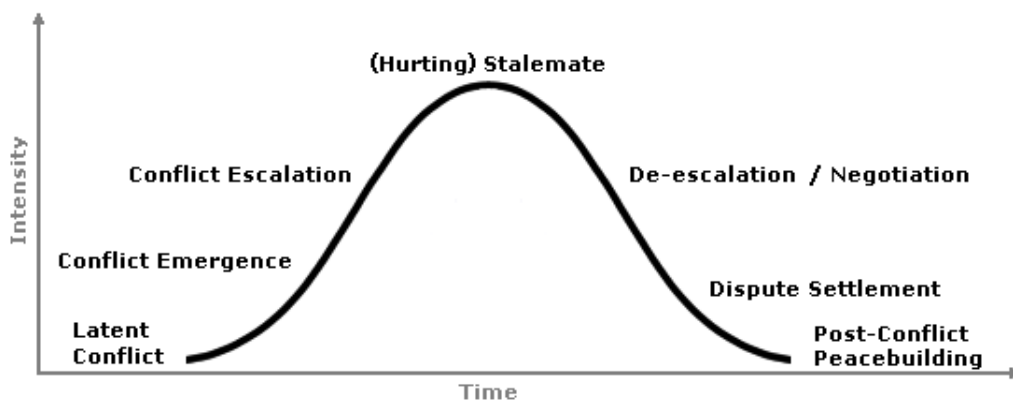


Illustration 6. Brahm’s Conflict Stages

It is in the mere calling of new pastor, CEO or organizational leader, that change alone, can create the possibility of conflict to emerge and sadly often does. Conflict connotes a condition of opposition and to a degree, and as stated above, it is a basic

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Eric Brahm, “Conflict Stages,” *Beyond Intractability*, eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, September 2003, <<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflict-stages>>.

resistance to change. Leonard Sweet calls it the “hunker in the bunker response, the barricade-building, trench-digging, wall-bricking activity that comes from dreaming the past while demeaning the future.”³¹ Underneath that, resistance is a generalized anxiety or a specific fear. Conflict is frequently tinged with a negative emotions and attitudes or sheer antagonism. Friedman argues that a congregational leader needs to anticipate that he will meet opposition to change and that the “system will react with seduction and sabotage to get the well-defined leader to ‘give up self’ in exchange for togetherness.”³² This can cause the congregational leader, potential hero and change agent, to refuse the call to adventure, joining the chorus of resisters and reluctantly give up leading change. However, a heroic leader will understand that resistance to change is a normal, natural and an inevitable part of the change process and the Hero’s Journey.

Supernatural Aid

Before the hero departs on the journey, there is usually an encounter with a mentor who shows up typically as a wise little old man, gnome, a disembodied voice or the hero is visited by a fairy godmother who provides some kind of amulet that helps guide and protect the hero. Campbell writes, “The hero to whom such a helper appears is typically one who has responded to the call.”³³

For organizations, this often might come as outside consultants or experts hired to assist the organization through a change process and/or discovery of the problems an

³¹ Leonard I. Sweet, *Soulsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 1.

³² Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 227.

³³ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 61.

organization may have before change is initiated. For churches, this might be an interim pastor or a meeting with the church's judicatory leadership. In the Episcopal Church, this might be a meeting with the Canon to the Ordinary (Bishop's Administrative officer) if the journey entails beginning a search for a new Rector (Sr. Pastor). At this stage, the journey is just about to begin, so the necessary tools, skills, knowledge and team must be gathered before the actual journey begins. This is a time of being equipped for the journey ahead, because the journey will come with conflict. The equipment and the amulet the hero will use must be matched well.

A congregational leader will need to see himself as being in one sense, the "supernatural aid," communicating the vision and need for change in a congregation by enlisting the "Buy-in" needed for change. Helping the congregation to feel, to see the vision and reason for change is a critical tool that comes from the outside as "supernatural aide" to the organization. Without the vision, urgently communicated and felt by a coalition, conflict will certainly erupt and the journey might be thwarted causing the congregational leader to quit and feel lost. This supernatural aid, in one form or another may also be given in the form of instruction from the first of many mentors, and perhaps those the leader has gathered as allies in the change process.

The Crossing of the First Threshold

It is time to cross the threshold; the biggest part of the mythic journey begins, the hero leaves all behind, moves to the limits of his known world and is met by a guardian. This gatekeeper acts as a guardian to a zone of great mystery and power. This is a place of uncertainty. Oddy says the hero must show resolve; "crossing the threshold often

means that we are prepared to let go of a dependence on the knowledge and skills that got us to where we are and seek to open ourselves to further growth and development.

Crossing the threshold is to risk failure.”³⁴ It is a point of no return. Upon entering this new world, the hero encounters what Campbell refers to as Threshold Guardians.

Hartman and Zimberoff describe them:

They are the gatekeepers to insure that only the worthy embark on the journey. They test the strength and resolve of the hero, and in so doing they test his commitment, fortress his strength, and build his stamina. The Guardians prepare the hero for the journey. These guardians often take the form of dragons; they are dangerous and threatening. And yet they can be an empowering ally, although it is usually difficult to recognize them as allies at the time they are threatening you.³⁵

These threshold guardians were waiting for me my first day as Rector at my church in Miami. Many of them truly wanted to help me, but some, I later discovered, would do almost anything to undermine me in hopes of facilitating my utter failure. These people can be forces that stand in the way of change and impede progress at key turning points. They can manifest themselves as jealous enemies, or “even the hero’s own fears and doubts.”³⁶

In a church setting, these guardians often look like greeters and members of the Welcome Committee who socially welcome new visitors, make introductions and engage in conversation. Pastors often serve in this manner. Sometimes these threshold guardians may themselves be the source of conflict by screening potential new members and sorting them according to their “fitness,” to be part of the church community, ensuring it survives properly. Some of them have been long-time members, patriarchs and matriarchs, “pillars

³⁴ Oddy, “Transformational Leadership is the Hero’s Journey.”

³⁵ Hartman and Zimberhoff, “The Hero’s Journey of Self-Transformation.” 5.

³⁶ Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey*, 5.

of the church” who were there before the new pastor arrived and will be there long after the pastor leaves. Congregational leaders should not avoid these threshold guardians, because some of them will give great education, insight and guidance to the leader in navigating the terrain of the journey ahead.

Stage II: Initiation/Journey in Conflict Transformation

The Road of Trials

The hero has left the familiar old world, has entered a magical realm and encounters a series of adventures of trials, tests and ordeals. Once having crossed the threshold, the hero enters a fantasy or dream type world with fluids, ambiguous forms and endures a series of trials. This is a beloved stage of the myth adventure. It has produced a world of literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. This is where the advice, amulets and representatives of the supernatural helper the hero met before crossing the threshold secretly aid the hero. Otherwise, it may be that the hero learns that there is a benevolent power everywhere supporting the hero’s supernatural journey.³⁷

Campbell thought this stage of the journey might be long but not dull, because the hero will face many adventures with each trial possibly being more difficult than the last and with each test; the hero develops in conviction and competence. He writes, “Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, and again, and again.

³⁷ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 89.

Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land.”³⁸

In a church setting, this imagery of trials, battle and war, if taken too literally, can be risky and add to conflict, so caution here would be wise and worth exploring a little more deeply. The trials and ordeals a church leader/hero might face here, to get to the prize, may be the resolution of a conflict that may lead to forgiveness and healing further down the road. It may be the correction of an imbalance of power in the church. At the same time, a church leader must recognize that conflict in a church often looks and feels like a battle, with people taking sides and weapons of destruction used that would shock many human resource managers. Parishioners emerge like dragons and packs of wolves. Sometimes the sheep attack.

Dennis Maynard, the author of *When Sheep Attack*, identifies what he calls “antagonists” - a person or a small group of people whose need to be in control begins to control them and the community, leading them to attack the leader. He writes, “Antagonists go for the jugular. They have a singular goal. They want to hurt, humiliate and destroy the senior pastor. In the course of their attacks, they intentionally want to divide the congregation between those that agree with them and the supporters of the rector.”³⁹ The reality is that there are mean-spirited parishioners who criticize and bully their clergy with the ultimate goal of forcing them out of the church.

Clergy often battle church members. David Noble reports, “Only two percent of church conflict involves doctrinal issues. Ninety eight percent of church conflict involves

³⁸ Ibid., 100.

³⁹ Dennis R. Maynard, *When Sheep Attack!* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishers, 2010), 13.

interpersonal issues. Control issues ranked as the most common cause of conflict (85%).”⁴⁰ For example, the Episcopal Church Pension Group in their study found that “conflict is a routine part of the rector’s life. Not only are the conflicts routine, in terms of their frequency, they are also routine in terms of their nature.”⁴¹ This chart shows conflict centers around matters of finance, worship, and personnel and leadership issues.



Illustration 7. Church Conflict

Often when clergy seek to transform or lead change in a parish, enemies of change emerge. There are always people who resist change and seek to battle the people driving the change. Often the change agents are clergy. Nevertheless, at the same time, there are friends and allies of change available to assist church leaders who understand the need for change.

⁴⁰ David Noble, “Staggering Statistics,” Church Conflict Forum, January 2, 2008,, <http://churchconflictforum.blogspot.com/2008/01/staggering-statistics.html>.

⁴¹ Matthew Price, *A Troubled Profession? Episcopal Clergy and Vocation at the Turn of the Millennium* (New York: Church Pension Group Office of Research, 2001), 19.

For the clergy leader, in the early stages of this part of the journey, it may entail employing Kotter's eight steps to change management discussed above and used earlier in stage 4 by re-establishing the sense of urgency, forming the guiding coalition, creating. As mentioned above, Rendle believes that in church culture leaders are trained to persuade, and so when "we meet resistance, we push back, the resistance will come back even harder. If that cycle continues unabated, eventually the system will push the leader out."⁴² This leads people to believe that the battle the heroic leader must engage is not always a battle with the external forces but a battle with the internal forces within. The internal dragons must be slain. To do this, the hero must have a "Meeting with the Goddess" and have "Atonement with the Father."

As stated above, pushing through resistance, like Yeager, is probably not the right approach. Rather conflict is more likely to be transformed when leaders stay "self-differentiated." Leadership, Friedman believes, has more to do with a leader's emotional and spiritual maturity than the education and data available to the leader. "If we must conceive of leadership in terms of expertise," writes Friedman, "none of us will ever feel adequately prepared."⁴³ A great deal of leadership theory focuses on how to change followers. What Friedman focused on was how leaders could change themselves. This is the major insight Friedman brings to leadership theory and that applies to the conflict transformation study here.

In the Hero's Journey, there are two common battles, "the Brother Battle," where the hero is at war with a familiar foe or with whom he has some affinity, and the "Dragon

⁴² Rendle, "Leading Change in the Congregation Meeting the Leadership Challenge."

⁴³ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 3.

Battle, where the battle is with an alien or monster. The hero may seek out some outside assistance or other amulets, weapons and allies as a reward for each of the trails, ordeals and battles won. For the congregational leader, these may look like opportunities to undergo additional training, coaching and use of a consultant. However, what Campbell and Friedman are saying is that the major battle is within, which leads to conflict transformation in an organization. The battle the leader must wage is within herself. It is a battle of self-mastery that is the critical task for the leader on a journey of conflict transformation. For the leader, it may mean being aware of her own anxiety, personality type, personal beliefs about conflict, family of origin issues, church norms, values about conflict and all associated issues surrounding conflict in church. Every hero and change leader will need to peel back her own assumptions, blind spots and biases to achieve new levels of awareness. To accomplish all of this, the hero will need a mentor, supernatural aid, “amulets” and all of the resources at her disposal. In the end, for a congregational leader to lead people effectively through conflict transformation, the transformation must begin with the leader.

Apotheosis and Ultimate Boon

Stringer writes, “With the gaining of knowledge, the hero reaches a divine state and vows to bring others to enlightenment.”⁴⁴ The hero has battled and resisted temptations, has had Atonement with the Father and has achieved a higher place of clarity, self-awareness, insight and personal transformation. Armed with this new

⁴⁴ Stringer, “Storytelling in Mediation,” 6.

knowledge, the hero is ready for the next difficult step of the adventure, helping others on their journey. The hero's appearance may have also symbolically changed.

This is the goal of the journey, gained after a final battle with the ultimate villain or an arduous last trial. "All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step, since in many myths the boon is something transcendent like the elixir of life itself, or a plant that supplies immortality, or the Holy Grail."⁴⁵

In both of the above steps, *Apotheosis* and the Ultimate Boon are the steps that cure the imbalance, the traumatic event or a realization that something is wrong with the leader's world and he must accept a call to journey. Apotheosis can be thought of as an "aha" moment and the Ultimate Boon, as the receiving of the elixir, the cure. As the journey continues, the prize must now be applied. Similar to an organizational consultant delivering a report to senior management about the nature of the problems ailing a corporation, the conclusions of the results of the report now needs to be applied.

For congregational leaders, these steps may be, as noted by Friedman, cutting through the noise to get to an understanding of the real issues behind the conflict that all have presumed to be fighting about, learning willingly not accepting the analysis of others, no matter how neutral that person may appear. Leaders here would do well to consult with others for feedback on what lessons have been learned and breakthroughs have come from engaging others in the conflict. They may ask: What are you seeing as the areas of growth for the congregation and yourself because of this journey? The lessons and insights are the true treasure, the inner gold won because of being on the

⁴⁵ Wikipedia, "The Hero's Journey."

journey. The treasure could be the death of the old self and a phoenix rebirth – a transformed leader.

With a deeper understanding of the real issues behind a conflict, the leader can plan to engage the congregation in the next step of the Hero's Journey using Lederach's map. Lederach says, "The second point of inquiry is the horizon of the future, the image of what we wish to create. It asks us to consider what we would ideally like to see in place."⁴⁶ But, this is not a linear change, the change process and conflict transformation process is a circular pattern that looks back "toward the immediate situation and the range of change processes that may emerge . . . what we will refer to here as a process structure."⁴⁷ It may be that one of the insights the leader has at this stage is that she is not the right person to be leading the conflict transformation process, because she may be too emotionally entangled in the conflict, thus requiring the assistance of outside conflict resolution specialists and trainers who use Lederach's mediation model. It is this model that "suggests that education, advocacy, and mediation share the goal of restructuring peaceful relationships."⁴⁸ The vision is one of restoring peace, reducing tensions to pursue constructive change and enhancing relationships. Lederach and Campbell would agree, "Conflict transformation is a circular journey with a purpose."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lederach, "Conflict Transformation."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, 14.

⁴⁹ Lederach, "Conflict Transformation."

Stage III: Return in Conflict Transformation

The third and final phase of the Hero's Journey is called the Return. There are, in fact, six steps in Campbell's work: Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live. Vogler's adaptation is suited for an inclusive discussion under the general phase of the Return (with the Treasure).

The transformed hero returns to share the treasure with the world but is the community ready for the hero's insightful return? A congregational leader, now equipped with new insights into the real causes of conflict, or a deeper self-understanding of how he might have been the cause of the conflict, can take the steps to apply the "elixir" to a wounded or conflicted congregation. Oddy says, "If a leader is courageous enough to persist with their efforts to change themselves and become the leader their organization needs them to be then treasures will be discovered."⁵⁰ However, this final phase can be the hardest, for in the return home, he "can become sidetracked by indecisiveness, by confused values, by seduction into intoxication, or by an inflated ego."⁵¹ Continued self-mastery by the leader, with the help of an executive coach, mental health professional, spiritual director or mentor clergy may be the elixir that is needed and applied.

If what is called for in congregational conflict is structural process of change, then a change process needs to be designed and implemented like that of Kotter. It may be that, along with Kotter's process of transformation steps, Lederach's "Inquiry 3" change process can be employed "that attend to the web of interconnected needs, relationships,

⁵⁰ Oddy, "Transformational Leadership is the Hero's Journey."

⁵¹ Hartman Zimmerhoff, "The Hero's Journey of Self-Transformation:" 30.

and patterns. Because the change processes should address both the immediate problems and the broader relational and structural patterns, we need to reflect on multiple levels and types of change rather than focusing on a single operational solution.”⁵²

Kotter and Lederach agree that short-term wins are needed for change, along with “short-term solutions . . . (which) also build platforms capable of promoting long-term social change.”⁵³ Because congregational leaders are connected to their members, a systems approach as Friedman taught, needs to be employed, recognizing the complexity of the fact that there might be a multiplicity of people each working out their own respective agendas and change journeys, as well. Rowan Hetherington, an IBM Digital Change Strategist, believes all people want to “implement change, but their ‘change’ is probably different to the one you are trying to lead and implement . . . to get the people you are trying to influence to buy in to your hero's journey change agenda, you must find a way to align their agenda with yours, or yours with theirs.”⁵⁴

This is similar to what Lederach understands, the ability to sustain and understand dialogue is a critical element for constructive change. In other words, leaders find out the shared motivations, interests, beliefs or ambitions of others and they find themselves in conflict. Congregational leaders do not usually, and naturally, possess this kind of level of conflict transformational abilities without significant training and personal growth. When conflict in a church erupts, leaders often become defensive, as Friedman has so artfully described.

⁵² Lederach, “Conflict Transformation.”

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Rowan Hetherington, “The Hero’s Journey – Implications for Leading Change,” April 9, 2011, http://rowan.typepad.com/watts_up/2011/04/the-heros-journey-implications-for-leading-change.html.

If an organizational leader goes on the Hero's Journey of personal transformation, he then can return to the organization with the insight, the courage and tools to lead the organization through change. When conflict emerges, the self-differentiated leader engages with the qualities of compassion, interconnectedness and forgiveness.

Conclusion

All organizations are being challenged to change at a record pace for many reasons. Today's modern American religious congregations are often in crisis in a complex emotional laden social system that often resemble an anxious family. If a religious congregational leader, engaged in a conflict, is to emerge successfully from conflict and be able to institute transformative, systemic change then the leader will also need to work on defining his own values, beliefs and vision.

The discussion in this chapter outlined some of what is indispensable for how heroic congregational leaders can transform a church in conflict. The Hero's Journey provides a metaphor for change to happen and the engagement of conflict and transformation as a place of healing and forgiveness,

If one understands and accepts that the status quo, stagnant, "hunker in the bunker" church mentality is a conflict waiting to happen, then accepting the call to go on a change journey, look at oneself and the organization one leads with some strategic planning, guidance and tools is vital. Leaders will need to accept aid from others who can help them deal with the battles and challenges of transforming conflict. For a leader it also means looking at one's self and achieving insightful self-mastery that leads to personal transformation. For the congregation, the employment of eight change

management steps that Kotter proposed is critical. The insights of Friedman on being a non-anxious presence, of staying connected by listening and working collaboratively to arrive at solutions in a win-win manner. This is all hard work, but so is any transformation.

Applying the conceptual lens of this archetypal heroic journey to challenges leaders face in congregations can stimulate effective and courageous conflict transformation. This metaphor has the power to stimulate the imagination of a leader and a congregation towards dialogue, shared purpose and urgency of action. Leadership in the midst of conflict is less about strategies or techniques to employ in resolving conflicts and more about being true to oneself so that conflict can be transformed with healing and forgiveness.

CHAPTER 8

EXPLORING TRAUMA AND THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Introduction

Trauma can be a journey to a spiritual awakening. If sin and moral failure can be the catalyst to lead one to repent and spiritually return to God, then perhaps the same can be seen in the realm of the wounds of trauma. Trauma confronts a person at the core of herself and spirit. Trauma unwraps her to explore spiritual questions and new worldviews. Many have travelled this path of healing and wholeness that leads to spiritual enlightenment, but in today's contemporary society, those that could help a person navigate through the darkness of traumatic injury to spiritual healing are few in number. Finding an inclusive spiritual model that transcends religious denominations for chaplains in institutional settings is vital.

There are guides, however, who have traveled the terrain before. Through the work of existential and transpersonal psychologist, Robert Grant, leaders can seek to gain a deeper and more thoughtful understanding of the phenomenon of trauma from a clinical

and theoretical perspective.¹ Joined with the insights of Shelly Rambo, this chapter provides a hermeneutical, theological and spiritual lens for understanding the journey to the healing of trauma. Finally, from Viktor Frankl this chapter explores the journey of transformation through trauma that can lead to a life of deeper meaning, purpose and hope despite the wounds of trauma.

Trauma Defined

Psychological trauma from experiences, such as domestic violence, child abuse, rape, violent crime, vehicular accidents crime, war, unexpected loss of loved ones, natural disasters and terminal illness are increasingly common. The *DSM-IV-TR* (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) states that a trauma involves the threat or the perceived threat to one's life.² Trauma can involve a negative experience outside of one's normal realm of experience. Trauma is like an earthquake that can shudder the underpinnings of one's beliefs about life and smash assumptions of trust. When violent crimes happen, like "Columbine," "911" or the Aurora movie theatre massacre, the trauma is felt nationally. Grant says that to be "traumatized is to be rendered helpless, powerless and/or living in fear of losing one's physical, emotional and spiritual integrity."³ A traumatic event can trigger intense emotional reactions. People respond differently; some with few reactions, others with many. The types of emotional

¹ Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation* (Oakland, CA: Self-published, 1999). Grant is a worldwide lecturer trainer on psychological trauma, sexuality and spirituality.

² *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

³ Robert Grant, *Growth through Adversity: Coming Out the Other Side of Trauma, Illness and Loss* (San Mateo, CA: Self-published, 2008), 9.

reactions people have are based on many factors: if the event was sudden, or how long it lasted; it can affect a person along with whether or not the person had experienced traumas like it in the past. When strong reactions last for months or years, experts refer to this as “post-traumatic stress.” Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the most mutual shared diagnostic category to describe symptoms arising from emotionally traumatic experience(s). The DSM-IV-TR. says there are three clusters of symptoms in PTSD: “Intrusions, such as flashbacks or nightmares, where the traumatic event is re-experienced. Avoidance, when the person tries to reduce exposure to people or things that might bring on their intrusive symptoms. And hyper-arousal, meaning physiologic signs of increased arousal, such as hyper-vigilance or increased startle response.”⁴ Grant believes that only a minority of traumatized people meet the true criteria of the diagnosis of PTSD.⁵ Most people experience “subclinical presentations of PTSD, such as mental illness and loss, along with other forms of human distress.”⁶

Trauma can alter, damage and even destroy one’s worldview and create feelings of being lost, insecure, disoriented and powerless. Trauma that is not addressed finds itself then “suppressed and/or overcompensated” in a number of ways, through addictions, personality disorders, eating disorders, sexual dysfunctions attention, deficit disorders and a variety of bodily complaints. Grant lists the symptoms as:

Hyper-vigilance that can involve a constant checking of the environment to ensure that individuals are safe and not at risk of being re-traumatized.

⁴ David Baldwin, “About Trauma,” David Baldwin's Trauma Information Pages, <http://www.trauma-pages.com/trauma.php> (accessed July 29, 2012).

⁵ Grant, *Growth through Adversity*, 9.

⁶ Ibid.

Increased startle reaction is a strong reaction to any stimuli (sound, smell or sensation) reminiscent of prior traumatic stimuli. These stimuli typically frighten individuals; make them feel that they are heading back into danger and/or about to experience another traumatic event.

Intrusive/repetitive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors also referred to as flashbacks and reliving experiences where unaddressed trauma is actively thrust into awareness.

Difficulties concentrating are also as a result of trying to manage and/or hold out of awareness intrusive material. Emotional lability - mood swings that involve a roller coaster of feelings (usually some form of sadness, depression, anxiety or rage).

Sleep and dream disturbances, such as, difficulties falling asleep and staying asleep; including repeated awakenings and nightmares/night terrors. The aforementioned often involves feeling vulnerable and trying to ward off or protect against traumatic material and/or further injury.

Physical complaints related to chronic arousal of the Sympathetic Nervous System, such as, nausea, diarrhea, sweating, and gastrointestinal problems, etc...

Compulsive repetitions (e.g., counting over and over from 1-10) as a means of distracting self from traumatic material that is trying to force its way into consciousness.

Innumerable forms of self-medication that help individuals manage and/or de-escalate anxiety, using depressants (usually alcohol and/marijuana), along with an assortment of mood-altering behaviors and processes (e.g., compulsive gambling, shopping, T.V. watching, sex, over work, self-cutting, etc.).⁷

The above symptoms can desensitize (emotionally numb) and/or distract

individuals from anxiety-provoking material that is pushing for conscious

acknowledgment. In addition, all of the above symptoms reflect surface manifestations of deep shifts in victim's identity structures, in their worldviews, and in their images of God in the aftermath of a traumatic event.⁸

People who work with traumatized populations experience another form of trauma called secondary trauma. Therapists, clergy, chaplains, nurses, public-health employees, doctors, spiritual directors, police officers, firefighters, paramedics, relief workers, probation officers and teachers are seriously affected by the injuries, stories and

⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

struggles, for they see the worst side of human nature and those whom they care for.

Grant writes, “Trauma is both toxic and contagious. One cannot enter the ‘underworld’ of trauma without having to pay a price or make a sacrifice. Those who constantly bear witness to the wounds of others absorb trauma vicariously.”⁹ Among health professionals, like nurses, the problem of ‘burn-out’ and ‘compassion fatigue’ is a significant problem. Many in the health care field want to ‘make things right.’ He continues:

Internalizing the pain of another can disrupt personal frames of meaning and lead to feelings of powerlessness. Continually seeing or hearing stories of pain and horror can challenge a professional's basic beliefs about self and society, as well as his/her need to be competent and in control. Counter-transferential reactions such as numbing, distancing, over identifying or rescuing are common amongst those who work with traumatized populations. This is especially true of professionals who carry unresolved traumas from their own childhoods. Many working with traumatized people experience a variety of post-traumatic stress reactions.¹⁰

If one is not to live a life of addictions or illusions of control and other distractions, then a pathway out of the continued impacts of trauma must be found. This journey of transformation is an awakening to the spiritual dimension. Examining some definitions is necessary at the outset of this exploration.

Spirituality Defined

Religion and spirituality are terms often used interchangeably, but religion is associated with adjectives such as institutional, liturgical, formal, structural, doctrinal and authoritarian. Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as “the experience of conscious

⁹ Grant, *Way of the Wound*, 15.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.”¹¹ Whether they are “separate enterprises” with no necessary connection, or “conflicting realities” or “two dimensions of a single enterprise” is not central to one’s exploration of this topic. Both religion and spirituality are concerned with providing a person with a sense of meaning, value and direction for their life.¹² So it is in this vein that my exploration of spirituality and trauma is directed: in what sense can embarking on a spiritual journey benefit a victim of trauma? Trauma creates an opening for spirituality like no other event in one’s life. It opens one up to the possibility to search for meaning, value, direction and healing in an intensely personal and even private way not normally dealt well by the structures of religions. Spirituality is a lens for one’s worldview and of how things work and of the forces that power them. Trauma challenges or shatters one’s worldview and creates uncertainty and instability about life. Whether or not a person is religious or spiritual, trauma is a spiritual experience because all of the values and meanings once held begs to be reexamined.¹³ Trauma pushes the self to expand and contain the trauma.

Many people turn to religion as a source of help when they experience trauma. Through the support of a congregation, the ministry of clergy/chaplains and religious literature persons can feel more empowered, comforted and even find coping strategies.¹⁴

¹¹ Arthur Holder, ed., “‘Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality’ 16,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 15-33.

¹² Sandra M. Schneiders, “Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum,” *Spiritus* 3:2 (2003): 173.

¹³ S. Smith, “Exploring the Interaction of Trauma and Spirituality,” *Traumatology* 10:4 (December 2004): 231-43, doi:10.1177/153476560401000403.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

Because trauma is such a universal experience that transcends religious boundaries created by humans, people need a spirituality equally universal that would transcend for example, “Catholic Spirituality” or “Buddhist Spirituality.” Grant may have provided such a model as he weaves together the diverse research and writings of Campbell, Evelyn Underhill, and the depth psychology of Frankl and Rollo May with the traditional spirituality of Thomas Merton and Adrian Van Kaam. Grant believes the task is to awaken the call of the Spirit and follow the call.¹⁵

The Ego, Self and Spirit

Before moving on to a discussion of the psycho-spiritual journey for the healing of trauma, there must be clarity on some terms as Grant employs them. Grant uses the term “ego” in a broad sense to designate the “self,” self-concept, self-image, identity, self-understanding and “false self.” The ego or social persona is the sense of self that most identify with. Ego is concerned with survival, happiness, and pleasure, wearing masks to make a good impression in the world, achievement, control, acquisition, social acceptance and role management. Ego is concerned with decision-making, planning and analysis.¹⁶ Grant writes, “Ego not only seeks, but often demands, personal and highly anthropomorphic understandings of reality and the Spirit. It wants nothing to do with faith, risk, ambiguity, paradox, mystery, uncertainty or being led to the truth . . . ego, like the psychotic, wants to depend on no one.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Grant, *Way of the Wound*, 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷ Ibid., 40.

Trauma has the power to expose the ego and crack open its lack of substance and cohesiveness. However, it is precisely at this point when the cracks are exposed that the initiation for the transformative journey of healing can begin. Grant says that the “radical lack of substance, underlying the ego, is where the Spirit initially seems most remote . . . [but] where the Spirit resides.”¹⁸

The “Self” on the other hand is intuitive and in Eastern culture understood to be in a “realm of consciousness existing beyond the ego . . . often referred to as the “Non-Self” or that part of consciousness that can unite with all that is other . . . knows that life is eternal, unchanging and that all forms of life are linked together.”¹⁹ The Self wants to relate to all of creation, seeks truth, is holistic, and questions the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. Whereas the ego wants little to do with matters of the Self and Spirit, the Self seeks to become whole through relationships whereas the ego seeks to become whole unto itself.²⁰

The Spirit “animates and sustains all of life . . . is shared by all, resides in the essence of all . . . invites all beings to participate in a divine plan . . . draws all life towards itself and its goals.”²¹ Although Grant is a loyal son of the Catholic Church, in his writings, God is not part of his map of the journey of transformation from trauma. However, in relation to the Spirit, Grant says that God is a “manageable image of

¹⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹ Ibid., 41.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 42, 43.

partialisation of the Spirit. God is to the Spirit what ego is to the Self. It is the Self that relates to the Spirit while the ego relates to God.”²²

All, Grant says, live in a socio-historical reality or prepackaged version of reality he calls the “Box.” It is the created image given to a person and enforced by culture and all the gatekeepers of culture (parents, teachers, priests, coaches, bosses, politicians, medical professionals, editors of media). It is a paradigm, a linguistic map, a matrix one grows up believing is reality. When something happens that falls outside this box – this is trauma. When these things happen, one tries to explain it away from within the box with statements like, “This is not supposed to happen to me, it happens to others,” or he may resort to a theological or spiritual explanation within his box, such as, it is “God’s will” or “God is testing me.” Whether it is scientific or theological, his explanations are the frameworks that try to make sense of his trauma.²³ Most people do not know they live in these boxes. Like the character “Neo,” in the movie *The Matrix*, people live in an illusion about reality until something happens – trauma. They do not want to believe there is even a box, so in fear and confusion, they would rather crawl back into a comfortable box and be with the “herd.” We either “stay on the margins of society and remain marginalized (i.e., homeless, mentally ill, criminal or revolutionary), or we edit our traumatic experience and then cram it back into our pre-trauma world view and belief system.”²⁴ The third option is the path of transformation; it is the Hero’s Journey, the mystical

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ Robert Grant, “Trauma, Addiction and Spirituality” (lecture, 2007 Guest House Summer Leadership Conference, New Orleans, LA, July 2007), <http://guesthouseinstitute.org/GHI%20EJ/Archive%209.8/2nd%20feature-Grant.pdf>.

²⁴ Ibid.

spiritual path to wholeness that deconstructs the ego that has been painstakingly been built over years. Grant says a traumatic event is like tasting the “fruit of knowledge,” it has the power to knock one out of the box and can be the opportunity to send her down a new road from which both mystics and madmen have emerged. Often people try to journey without maps or guides, but even when they do have a map, they must remember the “map is not the terrain.”²⁵

The Journey of Awakening

Trauma can be a hellish experience, but it can also be the catalyst or initiation of spiritual growth and enlightenment. Grant maps out the journey that “shamans, mystics and mythic heroes” have traveled by drawing on the work of Campbell and Underhill.²⁶ The journey of transformation is usually not begun until there is a shock or trauma where the ego surrenders before the Spirit and acknowledges “it” is “no thing” and needs to be connected to something greater than itself. Grant calls this the “Shock Phase.”²⁷ This journey needs an initial catalyst to start one off on the way. Indeed all of the greatest mystics in the Christian tradition Grant cites become great, not in spite of, but because of their traumatic experiences. He writes:

Ignatius was nearly killed on a battlefield and left to die. John of the Cross was tortured by his own confreres and put in prison. Looking at the lives of almost every church father and mother, they grew up in the midst of plagues or catastrophes, were surrounded by cultural upheaval and war, and often underwent numerous traumas of their own. . . . (Christ) had at least six Criterion A Events

²⁵ Eric Von Clausewitz, a nineteenth century military strategist is credited with this phrase. Grant quotes it in “Growth through Adversity,” 27.

²⁶ Grant, *Way of the Wound*, 45. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

according to the DSM[-IV]. He had a price on his head as a kid. I'm sure he had some questions about who his biological father was. People were trying to kill him, at several different times in his life. His best friends betrayed him. He was publicly humiliated, scourged and crucified. That's a lot of trauma. I believe that Christ became what he was supposed to become because of his traumas. More specifically, he fully became himself—he developed the core or essence of his person—because he learned the lessons of his wounds.²⁸

Grant mentions that not many people know that Francis of Assisi was a prisoner of war and nearly died in a prison camp; he believes this was the beginning of his conversion. When people sanitize the lives of saints to show their spiritual profundity, they then find we cannot relate to their lives and see how their traumas were really the path to their wholeness.²⁹

With the shock experienced, a crisis is created that demands one turn inward with profound questions about the meaning of life because the old answers no longer suffice. Stanislaus Grof defines this as a “spiritual emergency.” It is a “critical and experientially difficult stage of a profound psychological transformation that involves one’s entire being.”³⁰

Grant believes that a victim of trauma must move through the stages of purgation, illumination and union (Underhill) or Campbell’s “Hero’s Journey,” also known as the “Mono-myth” that is found throughout the world as a blueprint of growth and experience in life. It is reflected in movies, literature, ancient myths and all of the world religions. First, the hero faces the crisis or “Shock” then comes, “The Call.” But the hero may avoid and even refuse the call. Then comes a separation from one’s own familiar world where

²⁸ Grant, “Trauma, Addiction and Spirituality.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Stanislaus Grof, “Spiritual Emergency,” <http://spiritualemergency.blogspot.com/2006/01/defining-spiritual-emergency.html> (accessed July 29, 2012).

the “Purgation” must happen. During this phase, the “call is answered” followed by the “entering of the unknown.” Grant then discusses the “dark night of the ego” similar to John of the Cross’s “dark night of the self” (soul). In this phase, the ego and self once unconnected, endure initiation and transformation. Old ways of thinking and acting are transformed or abolished, clearing the way for a new level of enlightenment, consciousness, where compassion, skill and freedom are found.³¹ After successfully meeting the challenges through the dark nights, and encounters with evil, the initiate takes the journey’s final steps, to “Illumination” and the “return to his world” or “Union.”

The scope of this dissertation does not permit a detailed discussion of all stages whereby the ego and self with all its illusions are to be stripped down, to re-build the Self with compassion, interconnectedness and wholeness, nevertheless, the journey from victim, to heroic survivor, to “wounded healer” is the journey of transformation. Grant’s work is an amazingly detailed map and contribution to chaplains and all who work with trauma victims and survivors for it reminds them that the only way out of trauma is through it, there is no going around it or escaping it with reinforcement from our theological boxes.

Trauma and Christian Spirituality

Having discussed the structure of trauma and its impact on the human person, I will turn to the insights from another scholar of trauma and spirituality, Shelly Rambo of Boston University. Shifting to examining trauma from a Christian context, this chapter

³¹ Ibid., The Hero’s Journey 3 major steps, separation, initiation, and return are discussed in The Spiritual Emergency blog cited above. Grant’s model is inspired by Underhill as discussed in *Way of the Wound*.

asks what does the Christian narrative teach about how to understand trauma? The story of Jesus' passion, his death, resurrection and ascension form the paradigm for how Christians understand trauma and death. Jesus is crucified, but he is resurrected; this is at the core of the Christian faith. Christian tradition refers to this story as the *Triduum*, the three-day event shown in the Gospels, beginning with Maunday Thursday and ending on Easter Sunday. Jesus is crucified and buried on Good Friday, descends into hell on Holy Saturday, and resurrected on Sunday. Easter Sunday is God's day of victory; God has the last word. Death is not the end of life. In the resurrected Christ, death is conquered; mortals are free to live without fear of death, for it has no power over them.

Nevertheless, for people who have experienced trauma and death in a tragic manner, does the Christian redemptive lens adequately speak to those who have had these life altering events? For Rambo, the redemptive narrative of a victorious life over death is too linear. Even though this "outlook can provide a sense of promise and hope, the linear reading of life over-and-against death runs certain dangers. It can gloss over difficulty, casting it within a larger framework in which the new replaces the old, and in which good inevitably wins out over evil."³² To those who are suffering through trauma and its impact, comes the realization that life is forever changed and can never be the same, the old life can never be recovered. Life does not always follow one's chosen storyline. One cannot just "get over" trauma.

Given what is known of trauma, there is a "double structure" to trauma, the actual event and the aftermath, or an awakening to the event. Trauma keeps returning; it is not

³² Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 6.

finished. Rambo writes, “Suffering is what, in time, can be integrated into one’s understanding of the world. Trauma is what is not integrated in time; it is the difference between, closed, and open wound. Trauma is an open wound.”³³ Traumatic suffering remains. The disciple’s experience of the crucifixion is a traumatic experience; its impact shatters her reality, what remains of her box is her trauma and she does not get over the trauma because of the resurrection. For Rambo, the resurrection is not the victory of life over death, but the survival of love through and along with death.³⁴

Rambo searches for a “middle discourse,” the figurative place between the event and the awakening, the middle that is overshadowed by the two ends, or somewhere between Good Friday and Easter.³⁵ Rambo’s goal is to resist putting a “redemptive gloss” over trauma and instead use trauma as a hermeneutical lens to discover an alternative theological vision of healing by bearing witness to the “distance and fragmentation” trauma creates. Trauma then becomes the lens by which people create a theology of redemption rather than the problem to overcome.³⁶ When trauma destroys reality, or one’s foundations, or box, what remains? Rambo looks to theological concepts of love, divine presence and redemption through the lens of trauma to witness to what remains.³⁷

Rambo looks to Holy Saturday and the reflections of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr for a theology of trauma. For Balthasar, and “animated by Speyr’s

³³ Ibid., 7.

³⁴ Julia, “Reflections On Holy Saturday with Shelly Rambo,” WIT Women in Theology, April 7, 2012, <http://womenintheology.org/2012/04/07/reflections-on-holy-saturday-with-shelly-rambo/>.

³⁵ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 7.

³⁶ Ibid., 11.

³⁷ Ibid., 26.

twenty-five-year mystical participation in Christ's descent into hell on Holy Saturday, imagined it as the day a dead Jesus experienced the suffering like that of a tormented soul in hell. For Rambo, reflection on this suffering allows us to consider the logic of redemption rooted not in the passion or the resurrection, but in the space between the two."³⁸ Holy Saturday is the day on which Jesus' death begins to take on a new meaning, of endurance in the face of suffering. It is still an abyss of darkness. Julia writes, "The parallels with experiences of trauma are fairly transparent: because the effects of trauma remain long after the immediate threat has passed, victims have no reason to think that things will get better with time."³⁹

Von Balthasar's position however is controversial, and some have argued that it is heretical.⁴⁰ The "traditional" doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell (called the "Harrowing of Hell") has been presented by the Church as Christ "fully alive" in Hell preaching and proclaiming the Good News to the souls imprisoned there and to free the just who had died before him. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "By the expression 'He descended into hell', the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil 'who has the power of death' (Heb 2:14). In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went

³⁸ Jermaine McDonald, review of *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, *Practical Matters* 5 (Spring 2012): 1-3, <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/issue/5/reviews/spirit-and-trauma>.

³⁹ Julia, "Reflections On Holy Saturday with Shelly Rambo."

⁴⁰ Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007).

down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.”⁴¹

But what von Balthasar was arguing is that on Holy Saturday Jesus suffered in solidarity with the dead in Hell as a sharing in their self-damnation. Christ is victorious over sin and death but he had to wait for the Resurrection to come on Easter Sunday. This paradoxical soteriological understanding of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection helps in understanding and bearing witness to the patient endurance of suffering as a “tragic waiting” in hope of victory.⁴² Rambo believes that Balthasar and Speyr ask readers to consider how trauma survivors live in the aftermath of death. What if we patiently endure suffering in light of our understanding of Holy Saturday as a day Christ exemplified? What if “Holy Saturday, rather than Easter Sunday, is the moment of redemption for humanity, the event by which God is in complete solidarity with us? If God was willing to suffer in hell for humanity, then divine love knows no boundaries.”⁴³ That is precisely the hermeneutical key Rambo uses to unlock the next stage of her “theology of remaining” by focusing on divine love and presence. It would be a daunting task to explain all of Rambo's theology in the space allotted, so this chapter will attempt to touch on some key points and extract the useful elements of her approach for dealing with trauma survivors.

⁴¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), §636-637. <http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p122a5p1.htm> (accessed August 20, 2019).

⁴² Riyako Cecilia Hikota, *And Still We Wait: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theology of Holy Saturday and Christian Discipleship* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018).

⁴³ McDonald, review of *Spirit and Trauma*, 2.

Rambo next examines the Johannine Passion and Resurrection narratives, in particular Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple at the tomb, and the subsequent Last Discourse with the Disciples to “unearth a pneumatology of witness” that is absent from traditional interpretations.⁴⁴ Rambo says that Mary’s “witness reflects the complexities of seeing in the aftermath of death rather than an apologetic function other scholars Johannine scholars normally see in the John 20. 1-18.”⁴⁵ Rambo focuses on Mary’s experiences at the tomb:

First, the text tells us that it is still dark outside. Second, she is weeping throughout, indicating that she sees through a film of tears. Third, her look into the tomb is partial. The encounters that she has are encounters in which her sight is limited. In terms of being an eyewitness to the events following the passion, Mary appears to be a rather unsuccessful one. Instead, something is taking place through her unseeing.⁴⁶

The thing that is taking place Rambo points towards is Jesus calling Mary’s name and her confession of faith. Mary “recognises his voice, a voice she can’t identify when she was facing him. . . . If there is a turning between the two, it is not dependent on her seeing. The sound of her name breaks through the obstructions of sight.”⁴⁷ And so another theme in John’s Gospel gets highlighted, which is the role of the sheep knowing the voice of the shepherd. It is not in seeing that one believes. Rambo adds, “What, really, is she able to see? The text, I am suggesting, indicates that her inability to see does not really hinder her witness. The moment of recognition is, startlingly, not dependent on

⁴⁴ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 82.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rambo, “Between Death and Life,” 12.

sight.”⁴⁸ Rambo’s point is important. She goes on to say that the reader, John recognizes, does not understand that the name Mary uses is so important because John has to translate the meaning of the term, “Her moment of recognition is the reader’s moment of misrecognition.”⁴⁹ Mary’s witness, Rambo asserts, is different and is “dominated by ‘unseeing;’ it is not direct, clear, or easy. The text dismantles sight, sound, and even touch as vehicles constituting Mary’s witness.”⁵⁰

Rather than Mary Magdalene being a witness to seeing Jesus, Rambo says Mary’s role is to be a witness to a love that remains. Mary is a trauma survivor trying to make sense of her new world; the old box has to reintegrate now a new perspective, a new vision. Rambo has a literary almost poetic writing style for a theologian; she describes this movement in this way:

Mary witnesses a movement of love between death and life that reflects the movement of spirit, the breath of death breathed out on the cross making its way towards life. In the Johannine text, this spirit is breathed out on the cross in Jn 19:30 and is breathed into the disciples at Pentecost in Jn 20:22. Mary’s witness, between these two texts, is a witness to the spirit between the events of the cross and Pentecost. She witnesses the unlocatable breath of spirit that neither takes form in Jesus nor in his disciples. And this witness to spirit suggests that she is witnessing as much to an absence as she is a presence, to the pause before life, the space where life is an impossibility. To name this space between “love” is to recognise that Mary is witnessing something taking place; yet it is not a clear and definable presence. Framed within the farewell discourse, we see that the time and space that Mary witnesses is fraught with temporal and spatial distortions. It is neither clearly absence nor presence, neither death nor life. What she hears and “unsees” is love in a form unfamiliar to her; it is the breath of spirit persisting in

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 14.

the aftermath of death, not claiming her but naming her for and out of her grief. A weary breath of love.⁵¹

Jesus is therefore present in a new way, in a pneumatological dimension. Mary has never known Jesus before, thus her misrecognition.⁵² Rambo's approach captures the redemptive work of the Jesus and Spirit in a very refreshing new way by approaching the traditional Easter story not as one of new life replacing death, but of love surviving in the midst of death. Instead, the miracle of Easter is that death haunts life and remains alongside of it, just like the trauma that remains alongside the healing.⁵³ Healing from any trauma and healing from the trauma of the crucifixion does not happen in a logical or natural manner.

Jermaine McDonald questions the "utility" of Rambo's "hang in there" message for trauma survivors: "She cannot offer the hopeful promise of 'things will get better'." Instead, she insists that for those suffering through trauma, hope must be paired with imagination such that, "the practice of imagining life in new ways and in new forms [becomes] an essential aspect of witness."⁵⁴ McDonald misses the essential argument from the start and that is that the traditional linear Christian life from out of death proclamation misses the reality of trauma for those in its aftermath. Rambo acknowledges that "imagination" is a much more "tenuous and suspect term than hope," but it is precisely that "imagination" that must be sought when embarking on the Hero's Journey of healing that Grant proposes. McDonald says Rambo's theology acknowledges loss but

⁵¹ Ibid., 19.

⁵² Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 91.

⁵³ Ibid., 3

⁵⁴ McDonald, *Practical Matters*, 3. He cites Rambo, 168.

it “does not offer much in the way of how to remain with that sense of loss besides acknowledging it and sharing the story of it with others.”⁵⁵ True, but that is an essential part of the journey of transformation and healing that Grant and any mental health professional would propose. Rambo makes a valuable contribution to a theology that makes sense to survivors of trauma, for what remains is love. The ending of the Gospel of John asks the disciples to remain in his love and Peter is asked three times if he loves Jesus. The Gospel of John and the Beloved Disciple’s message is that to witness to the resurrection is to remain in God’s love, which is to remain with Jesus through the Spirit. Christians are witnesses to what survives, to what remains, and what remains is love.

Pathways to Awakening from Trauma to Spirituality

Man’s Search for Meaning: an Introduction to Logotherapy by Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl has been influential and useful in my work as a chaplain.⁵⁶ Frankl became internationally famous as the proponent of a psychological theory known as Logotherapy. He personally experienced the trauma of being a prisoner in a German concentration camp. Frankl lost everyone; his father, mother, brother and wife all died in camps or were sent to gas ovens, except for his sister, and yet he managed to continue to find life meaningful and purposeful. His experiences in the German concentration camp became the testing ground for the philosophy of life he had already formulated before he was imprisoned. Logotherapy is a term based on the Greek word *logos*, which he translated as meaning. The essence of Frankl’s philosophy and therapeutic approach is

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985).

that what man needs above all is a sense that his life has meaning. Life holds potential meaning under any conditions whatsoever, even the most traumatic conditions. In his book, he described how important human life and dignity is when there is an attempt to rob it; the ego is crushed and all values once held become in doubt. In such situations, Frankl observed, many a person just give up. Frequently this happened quite suddenly. He wrote:

We all feared this moment - not for ourselves, which would have been pointless, but for our friends. Usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or to go out on the parade grounds. No entreaties, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there hardly moving. If this crisis was brought about by an illness, he refused to be taken to the sick bay or do anything to keep himself. He simply gave up.⁵⁷

This revealed the close relationship between body and mind and it was not long before the man died. Episodes such as these provided damaging verification of Frankl's principle that man must find meaning in his life or else he would psychologically and spiritually collapse from trauma. Recalling Nietzsche's words: "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how,"⁵⁸ became the guiding motto for all of Frankl's psychotherapeutic efforts.

Frankl recognizes that the meaning of life differs from individual to individual, and from time to time, thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in an ultimate or general way.⁵⁹ Questions about the meaning of life can never be found by over-generalization but are unique for each person.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 131.

Logotherapy is based on three tenets: First, life has meaning through what one gives to the world and through what she does, in what she contributes, in circumstances, even the most wretched ones. Second, every person has an intrinsic desire to find meaning and this will to meaning is man's principal motivation for living. Third, every person has the sovereignty to find meaning.⁶⁰

According to Frankl, meaning can be “discovered” in life in three ways: First, in what one adds to life, and what he creates. Frankl calls these creative values. The most effectual way to find meaning is to occupy oneself into duty or commitment and action in one’s life. Second, meaning can be discovered through what one contributes to life and what he receives from life, that is in what he experiences. This is experienced in one’s openness to the world - for example, in submission to the beauty of nature, art and especially in experiencing and celebrating the uniqueness of all human beings. To experience a person in their uniqueness is to love them. Frankl calls these “experiential values.” Third, for those who are “deprived of the opportunity to find meaning in a deed, or in work, or in love, and are faced with an irreversible fate (for example, a concentration camp or an incurable disease, or going blind) then the doorway of meaning is open to them through the attitude they take towards their situation. One choice remains no one can take away from us - the choice of our attitude toward it.”⁶¹

Frankl used the term “spirit,” but not in a “spiritual” or “religious” sense, rather in the sense of the “will” of the human being. For some persons searching for meaning is the same as the search for God. Although there seems to be some disagreement about

⁶⁰ Ibid., 135-137.

⁶¹ Ibid., 133-134.

whether he believed in God, he did pray and practice aspects of his Jewish faith. In his later book called *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* Frankl says, "God is not one thing among others but being itself or BEING (capitalized by Martin Heidegger)." ⁶² Frankl ultimately came to believe in a God that looked more like this, "Whenever you are talking to yourself in utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude—he to whom you are addressing yourself may justifiably be called God" ⁶³ God is, ultimately, me – and you. The "spirit" then was a participation in BEING.

Frankl's work can be placed in the field of spirituality, but only in the broad sense of Schneider's definition. According to Frankl, three factors characterize human existence: spirituality, freedom and responsibility. The spiritual dimension is the very core of humanity, the "spiritual dimension [it] cannot be ignored, for it is what makes us human." ⁶⁴ Frankl believed that the single most important thing that kept a survivor alive was faith, for a loss of faith was to be "doomed" because the will to live seldom returned. ⁶⁵ Therefore, the human capacity to tap into the spiritual dimension in order to transcend trauma and suffering is vital. The human spirit may be traumatized, but it remains intact. The objective of logotherapy is to guide the human spirit to fulfill its tasks. Frankl called this lack of meaning an "existential vacuum" and it creates a

⁶² Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Basic Books, 2000), 147.

⁶³ Ibid., 151.

⁶⁴ Viktor E. Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: from Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: Vintage, 1986), 16.

⁶⁵ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 95.

“noögenic neurosis”⁶⁶ The human spirit has the capacity to self-heal by tapping into its own inner resources such as love, the will to meaning, purpose in life, hope, dignity, creativity, conscience and the capacity for choice. Logotherapy focuses on this spiritual or “noetic” dimension through three techniques:

The first is dereflection, in which a person is told to cease centering on oneself and search for the meaning outside oneself. A decrease in anxiety and frustration comes in the task of searching for meaning. Searching for meaning outside self decreases anxiety.⁶⁷

Second is, paradoxical intention, in which a person is told to create in one’s mind a worst-case scenario or nightmare, so ridiculous or impossible so one can laugh at it, thereby taking responsibility over them. Paradoxical intention is grounded on the human ability of self-distancing or self-detachment. Clarity and perspective emerge when the problem is no longer something that defines or consumes him.⁶⁸

Finally, there is tragic optimism, which gives survivors hope from the ashes of disaster and trauma. Frankl writes, “I speak of a tragic optimism, that is, an optimism in the face of tragedy and in view of the human potential which at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 146-147.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 162.

Frankl's techniques are being effectively used all over the world by therapists, clergy and chaplains to treat patients and trauma survivors. It adds a final dimension to the journey from wounded survivor to being able see meaning from the impact of trauma and the suffering it causes. When meaning is found, suffering ceases to be suffering, it surrenders the pain and it becomes the pathway to a deeper spiritual understanding of the new reality of life.

Conclusion

Trauma, despite its pain and brutality, has the power to open a person to deep spiritual growth. Either one takes the journey or the trauma will take her. It is a life or death journey for the traumatized. There are guides for the journey of transformation from wounded victim of trauma; it is Christ's journey and that of countless other mythic heroes of the past in classic literature and cinema. While in the midst of trauma, one cannot see, she is in darkness, still waiting for the dawn. Mary Magdalene is a witness to both loss and darkness as she struggled to see a new reality. When she did see through her tears, what she saw that remains is love. The Spirit is the guide that leads out of the darkness to the new light with all its shadows. To emerge out of darkness into the light requires a period of reflection on where one has been. The insights of a survivor like Frankl, serves as an example of that wounded healer who can see the meaning and purpose of loss, powerlessness, disasters and death.

Chaplains and anyone guiding the sensitive work of ministering to trauma survivors must have a map of this journey. The terrain is not always clear on the map, it helps to go on this journey with a wounded healer. Many in ministry and in the mental

health profession have recovered from trauma, but far too many have not. It is my hope that this academic paper may be of some descriptive and constructive value to those in the field of ministry to not only understand the power of trauma, but its ability to initiate people into deeper spiritual awakening.

T. S. Eliot's epic poem, "Little Gidding," expressed the Hero's Journey of awakening when he wrote, "And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."⁷⁰ If one's journey into wholeness is to come full circle, he must struggle to awaken from his darkness and recognize the light that is before him, that calls him to remember that healing comes through remaining in the Spirit.

⁷⁰ Duane Elgin, "We Are On a Heroic Journey," Great Transition Stories, accessed August 3, 2012, http://www.greattransitionstories.org/wiki/Story:Heroic_Journey.

CONCLUSION

Leadership

The Hero's Journey can serve as a metaphor for the Christian life and leadership. Earlier chapters pointed out how Christ's Journey and the Hero's Journey were similar. The Hero's Journey is about transformation. The story goes like this, the individual, the hero, begins in a place of comfort, but she wants something more, she searches and enters into a place of testing and finding challenges, but she adapts and grows, paying a price for having found the treasure and returns back transformed. It is the story of redemption, of a quest for salvation of the world and oneself. Where one starts is not where she wants to end. Everyone seeks something better, something more or transformation.

This story is a pattern and classic truth found around the world. As Jung and Campbell believed, people's minds are hard-wired to see and live out this mono-mythic life. If this is natural, that is part of human nature, and God might have planted it as a divine blueprint for how to seek transformation and redemption. Chapter 2, looked at Edinger's illustration of how the Hero's Journey paralleled Jesus' life. Clearly, there are elements of the Hero's Journey in the life of Jesus. Jesus Christ asked on numerous occasions to follow him. Therefore, being a Christian is about being on a Hero's Journey. Christians are called to lead life heroically towards a vision of transformation.

The Hero's Journey as a Model for Christian Leadership

Part Three looked at visionary leadership and the Hero's Journey. Many of the ideas contained therein can be applicable to general leadership lessons. This chapter examines more carefully how the Hero's Journey is a model for Christian leadership.

The Hero's Journey has three fundamental stages: leaving the known for the unknown to seek a treasure, encountering trials and challenges that test the hero's resolve, returning with treasure, enlightenment or "elixir" to one's community. Fundamentally, it is about transformation, which is what being called to follow Jesus Christ is also all about.

Bill Lawrence, president of Leader Formation International says, "Leadership is the act of influencing/serving others out of Christ's interests in their lives so they accomplish God's purposes for and through them."¹ Christian leadership is rooted in service and transformation of lives. Christian leaders hear a call and heed the call to go on a "spiritual journey" as well, where they are tapping into their deeper yearnings for something more, something better and something different. When they join with others in pursuing that call, they become fellow pilgrims—called to help lead them on their journeys. This is what authentic Christian leaders do; they are true to themselves. In pursuing they "become mentors." Leaders hear through their inner voice, yet they are bonded together with others on a similar path. This is the first stage of the Hero's Journey, the departure or separation from the old world of the self that is broken, a sinner, and is introduced to God in the Christian faith, usually through the witness or ministry of others also on the journey. Fellow Christians may be relatives—a spouse, a friend, a mentor and the Holy Spirit. Spiritual directors often speak of the spiritual life as one of journey. Christian leaders are those who hear the call and cross the threshold to the adventure of following Christ with others.

¹ Bill Lawrence, "What Is Christian Leadership? 8 Principles," Online Campbellsville, March 2, 2018, <https://online.campbellsville.edu/ministry/christian-leadership-principles/>.

Chapter 1 spoke about the Church having a mission and used the concept that exists in the Kabbalah of “*tikkun*,” that unique calling and mission of all human beings. Both Judaism and Christianity believe that God has given each person a unique mission or purpose; Jews call it *tikkun*, which flows from one’s creation. When a person discovers and acts on his *tikkun*, she is in the process of repairing the world or from a Christian perspective, the building up of the “Kingdom of God.” Christian leaders who see themselves on a heroic journey would look at their lives as being one of God asking for only thing from each person, to fulfill his mission in life – his *tikkun*. This is the call and the challenge of adventure. It calls for discernment of the mission and the calling. Christian leaders must discern their unique calling and mission, and then have the courage to use those talents for the good and the service of the Church or community.

If one sees herself as a container of God’s presence, which she brings into the world through living, if she lives her life according to the unique purpose and mission she was given at her creation, then she will become an authentic Christian leader in the building of the Kingdom of God. God sees the possibility of what the created world could be, hands that possibility through creation to his people and hands them the will and the means to co-create with him. All people have been given a unique purpose, to do the work in this world that God cannot do. To do that Christian leaders must go on a heroic journey of discernment, fighting one’s demons of inauthenticity, hoarding of power, control over others and a sense of indispensability. Leaders need to have vision and see what is possible. When leaders do that, they bring healing. For as leaders, as they move through the world, they leave behind either wreckage or healing. For Christian leaders on the Hero’s Journey, the treasure they seek is the knowledge of the uniqueness of God in

them, their mission, their *tikkun*, their purpose. Once found, Heroic Christian leaders will then know the power and authority they have to act in the world to fulfill it. This means that when they have a vision of where to go in life, they will know how to fulfill it and they walk through the world bringing healing.

Being an authentic Christian leader means not just fulfilling one's purpose, but imagining, creating a vision of well being and success for others in the Church. Again, not being defined only on the basis of what they accomplish for themselves, but in what they accomplish for the rest of the world, for the Kingdom of God. The Hero's Journey is the model of Christian leadership, for it calls to depart on a pilgrimage, a challenging adventure, to go the Divine beyond, in search of the mission, to fight the darkness of the false self, experience resurrection and her own spiritual death and rebirth. Finally, she returns to bring the truth of life back so that others fellow sojourners can go on their own journeys.

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